

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA

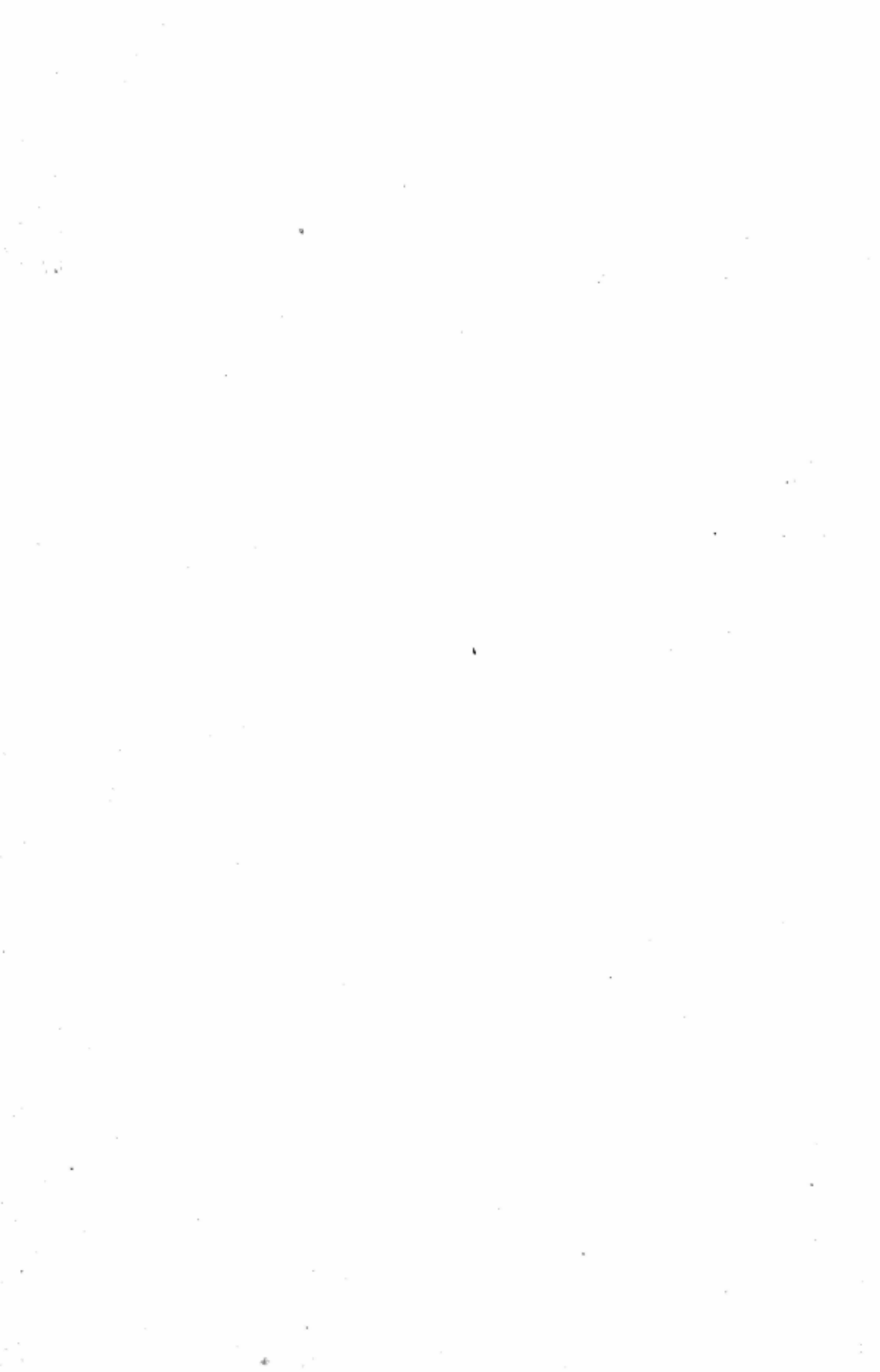
CENTRAL  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
LIBRARY

ACCESSION NO. 18533.

CALL No. 891.44209 Neo







18533

NEW LIGHT  
ON  
HISTORY OF ASAMĪYĀ LITERATURE

(FROM THE EARLIEST UNTIL RECENT TIMES)

INCLUDING  
AN ACCOUNT OF ITS ANTECEDENTS

BY  
**DIMBESWAR NEOG**  
*Guāhātī, Asam, Bhārat*

WITH  
INTRODUCTION  
BY  
SRI BISNURAM MEDHI,  
*Governor of Madras, Bhārat*

PREFACE  
BY  
DR. SUNITI KUMAR CHATTERJI,  
*Emeritus Professor, Chairman, West Bengal Council*

FOREWORD  
BY  
PROFESSOR JULES BLOCH,  
*Chaire de langue et Littérature Sanscrites,  
Collège de France, Paris*

LIFE-SKETCH  
BY  
LATE DR. BENI MADHAV BARUA,  
*Tripitakācarya, Professor, Calcutta University*

891.44a09

Neo

All Rights Reserved

BY

**Xuwani Prakās**

(BEAUTY PUBLICATIONS)

Dispur, Gauhati,

Assam, India

Price Rs. 30-00

First Published in 1962

CENTRAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
LIBRARY, NEW DELHI

Acc. No. 18533

Date.... 9.7.63

Call No. 891.44.209/Neo

Printed at G. S. Press,  
21, Narasingapuram Street,  
Mount Road, Madras-2.

## INTRODUCTION

by

SRI BISNURAM MEDHI,  
*Rājyapāl, Madras*

I have great pleasure in accepting this invitation to write this introduction to this authoritative and exhaustive History of Literature of my own mother-tongue, Assamese, and I consider it a privilege to introduce the author Shri Dimbeswar Neog to the English-reading public. He is a great scholar and has devoted his whole life and has undertaken herculean labour and immense pains for the last forty years in collecting important materials to give a comprehensive idea of ancient, mediaeval and modern development and trend of Assamese literature and how it has played the most important part in welding together various people of the North-Eastern corner of India into a single unilingual unity.

The Tribals in the Hills and the Plains have freely adopted whatever they found in our way of life, our language and culture. In the same way, Plains people have adopted many of their customs, institutions and practices. The Assamese people are composed of Tribals and non-Tribals. The Assamese language is a composite structure of words borrowed from Sanskrit, Persian and tribal languages. Even the dress of the Assamese, their customs and amusements represent a mixture of tribal and non-tribal elements. About seven lakhs of Tribals are living in the Plains in the closest of friendship with the rest of the population of the Brahmaputra Valley. Among the Nagas there are 22 sub-tribes speaking different dialects and one sub-tribe cannot understand the dialect of the other sub-tribe. Assamese language serves as a *lingua-franca* in the entire area of Naga Hills and Tuensang and the people living there exchange their ideas through Assamese language which is their *lingua-franca*.

I feel greatly relieved to think that my task of writing this preface has been rendered comparatively easier as eminent Orientalists and world-famous scholars like Prof. Jules Bloch and Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji have commended the work to the English readers of the world and late Tripitakacarya Dr. Benimadhav Barua of international fame has even given a life-sketch of the author. They have left very

little for me except to place on record my heartfelt felicitations to the author for bringing out this volume in English to reach the wider public.

One cannot but be impressed immensely by the steadfast devotion of Shri Neog to the literary culture of Assam for a generation despite immense odds. His contribution both in the creative and critical spheres is quite considerable. In the creative line his original works, both in prose and verse, and more especially in the latter, assure him a high place among the living authors and in the literature of the State. His contribution in collecting and editing the folk-literature and writing the literary history in general and that of the Vaiṣṇavite period in particular is praise-worthy.

I am glad to say that his publications in both of these lines in Assamese number about 80 and cover a long range of subjects, including education, science and religion. He was also a journalist and his contribution to journals in and outside the State both in Assamese and in English are numerous in various subjects.

Shri Neog's earlier efforts in preparing this history consists of half a dozen histories of the literature of different periods and his anthologies of Assamese prose and poetry, for many of which he got competitive prizes and medals. His English works connected with the subject include "Introduction to Asam—the country, the people and the speech," published by Messrs. Vora & Co., Bombay and "History of Modern Assamese Literature" published by the Ganganath Jha Research Institute, Allahabad.

Shri Neog is a versatile scholar of Assam and an Educationist and historian of the literature and culture of the State of Assam. I feel that none can be better equipped and better fitted than Shri Neog with his scholarly study for the task of writing an authentic history of different periods of Assamese language.

I wish his work and labour will be widely appreciated.

Raj Bhavan, Guindy,  
Madras Governor's Camp,  
December 24, 1960.

BISNURAM MEDHI,  
*Governor of Madras.*

## PREFACE

by

DR. SUNITI KUMAR CHATTERJI

[Doctor of Literature (on *Origin and Development of the Bengali Language*), London, Emeritus Khaira Professor of Indian Linguistics and Phonetics, and Head of the Department of Comparative Philology in the Calcutta University, Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society, Bengal; Hony. Member, Societe Asiatic, Paris and American Oriental Society]

Assamese is one of the 14 main literary languages of India, taking its place beside Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Oriya, Punjabi, Kashmiri, Sindhi, Gujarati, Marathi on the one hand, and Telugu, Kannada, Tamil, and Malayalam on the other.

For the last one thousand years, Assamese has been the cultural vehicle of the inhabitants of an important part of India, the valley of the Brahmaputra river; and this New-Indo-Aryan Speech has been the most important factor in welding together the various peoples of the North-Eastern corner of India into a single unilingual unit, peoples of diverse ethnic origin, like the Aryans, the Dravidians, the Austrics (Kol or Nishada peoples), and most important for Assam and North-Eastern India, the Indo-Mongoloids (or *Kiratas*, as they were known to ancient Hindus).

The three eastern-most speeches of the great Indo-European family of languages, Assamese, Bengali and Oriya, are closely linked with each other; in fact they are like uterine sisters within the family. A thousand or twelve hundred years ago, Assamese, Bengali, and Oriya, virtually formed one single speech. Their differentiation into three distant literary speeches as vehicles of three slightly different forms of the same Pan-Indian took place as a result of the ethnological, political and economic conditions in Assam, Bengal and Orissa during the last few hundred years. Grammatically this agreement is very close indeed. It is mainly in the recently accentuated habits of pronunciation that the differences are noteworthy.

The literary output in these three languages have a very close family resemblance. All these three have a number of common metres amongst themselves particularly the metres known as *Payār* and as

Tripadi or Lachāri in Bengali. In both form and content, there is not much diversity. Slight orthographic changes will make passages of Early Assamese pass as good as Early Bengali and *vice-versa*, and passages of Bengali or Assamese can be made to pass as Oriya. It is the fact that the Brahmins of Orissa and those of Bengal and of Assam did not form a single inter-marrying community combined with the political situation in Assam and Orissa as independent Hindu lands as contrasted with Bengal as being under Mohammadan rule, that was largely responsible for the gradual establishment of the local speeches of Bengal, Assam and Orissa as separate languages. Assam was under the rule of the vigorous and masterful Āhom people (who were kinsmen of Siamese) from 1228. By 1650 the Āhoms became very largely Hinduised. They contributed a great deal in the evolution of Assamese culture, and one of their gifts to Assam was the writing of History. The Āhom word for history, "Buranji", a word of Tāi or Tibeto-Chinese origin, has been adopted in the Indo-Aryan Assamese as the equivalent of what would be called in Sanskrit 'Itihāsa'. Following the Āhom histories, a good many of which are extant, the Aryan Assamese came to be possessed of a number of very remarkable historical works, which form the most distinctive contribution of Assamese to Indian literature.

Apart from the *buranjis*, Assamese literature, whether in Early Assamese or in Modern Assamese, is of a piece with Bengali or Oriyā or Hindi literature. The older literature is mainly in poetry, and is religious in its main *genres*. The modern literature in an Indian language is more secular and is largely a reflex of English literature. The tremendous influence of English in the domain of literature in present-day India is apparent everywhere and Assamese has not been able to escape it.

Mr. Dimbeswar Neog is a versatile scholar of Assam, who is a student of science, a poet, an educationist and a historian of the literature and culture of his province, all in one. His studies in Assamese literature have been very fruitful; his *magnum opus* running up to several hundred pages (which we hope it will be possible to publish soon) will form one of the most comprehensive histories of the literature of a Modern Indian language attempted so far.

The University, Calcutta.  
25th June, 1948.

SUNITI KUMAR CHATTERJI

## FOREWORD

by

JULES BLOCH

*Chaire de langue et Litterature Sanscrites, Paris*

[Docteur Lettres (*Formation de la langue Mārāthā*), 1914; Professor Ecole des Langue Orientales (1920-37), College de France 1937-51; Honorary Member de Royal Asiatic Society, American Orientalist Society, School of Oriental and African Studies (London University); Member de Norwegian Academy; Fellow de Bhandarkar Orientalist Research Institute; teaching Comparative Philology mainly Indian — Aryan and Dravidian. Born in 1880, Paris. \*Stayed in India — mainly Pondycheri, Poona and Chandra Nagoor.]

After having published in his mother-tongue several books and essays on Assamese literature, Mr. Dimbeswar Neog is now placing before a larger public the results of many years of strenuous and disinterested labour.

Before it was printed, as far as I am aware, no full description of Assamese literature was to hand to be compared with the numerous histories of Bengali literature or the recent exhaustive History of Maithili Literature due to Dr. Jayakanta Mishra.

Now thanks to Mr. Dimbeswar Neog, all Indians will be acquainted with a new treasure of productions due to the Indian mind; and not only Indians but friends of India everywhere, amongst which being one, I wish the present authoritative book the success which the devotion and energy of its author deserves.

Paris, 1954

JULES BLOCH



## A BRIEF LIFE-SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

by

LATE BENI MADHAV BARUA

[M.A., D.Lit. (Lond.), Tripitakācārya (Colombo, *Honoris Causa*), Professor of Pāli and Sanskrit, and Ancient Indian History and Culture in the University of Calcutta.]

Dimbeswar Neog was born at Sibsagar, Assam, about the birth of the twentieth century. He passed his Matriculation and I.Sc. examinations, being placed in each in the first division, and also the B.Sc., B.A., and B.T. degree examinations of the Calcutta University by 1924. He completed his Post-Graduate lectures on English literature in 1926, and headed the list of successful candidates of the M.A. degree examination on Modern Indian Languages with Assamese as the principal subject for the first time. He identified himself with every student and literary movement in Assam and registered himself as an author and editor as early as 1921. He figured as the recipient of various competitive prizes and medals and was regarded as an unofficial "Poet-Laureate" in the school and college in which he studied. Even as a student he published some pioneer works on the folk-literature of Assam and edited several journals. It stands no less to his credit that he has written a large number of thoughtful and thought-provoking articles on a great variety of subjects, historical and philological, literary and scientific, educational and religious, and no few Prefaces and Reviews of literary and research works of great importance. He is the reputed author of about fifty books in Assamese and English, the most noteworthy among them being those on culture and literature and on Vaiṣṇavism in Assam. He was for some time a Professor of Assamese in the Lady Keane College in Shillong. He is a Life Member of the Assam Literary Association. He is a Member of the All-India (P.E.N.) writers' Association. He is also a Member of the Indian History Congress, and contributed some important papers to it on Ancient and Mediaeval Assam.

University of Calcutta,  
9-9-'47.

B. M. BARUA\*

\* Born: Pahartali, Chittagong  
31st December, 1888

\* Died: Maniktola, Calcutta  
24th March, 1948

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

These few pages may be regarded as an attempt to make the best of a worst situation, far from congenial or peaceful, by one who not only had but also chose the path of most resistance. Its author has neither any pretension for smartness, now called brilliance, nor any claim for pageantry, now styled as scholarship. On the contrary, he is one of those who would prefer an ounce of good sense to a ton of ostentatious scholarship. While the author has no parade of learning to demonstrate, he would fain lay under contribution better proofs of deep loyalty to his subject; but here too he has been obstructed by the powers that be in today's world, both seen and unseen.

This work will be adjudged, I am sure, all these personal considerations apart. Merit, if any, may be attributed most particularly to the two great savants of the world, Suniti Kumar Chatterji of Calcutta and Jules Bloch of Paris, who have in turn acted as my "guardian angels" in this effort; defects, which may not be few, should surely be ascribed to my inability to avail myself of their advice, knowingly or unknowingly. My indebtedness to "the mighty minds of old", mentioned or not, is deep and sacred. I also feel happy to cherish the memory of many young friends, now "Fortune hath scattered them at distance wide", who helped me in various mechanical matters.

In going through these pages my generous readers, in India and outside, can really feel like touring in a *terra incognita*, to use a common comparison, only if they do not carry Bengal or any such of their already familiar Indian States about with them. In that case 'they may miss many a seeming similarity and alleged inferiority'; but they may be sure of "exploring an infinitely entertaining difference" about the small State of Asam, literally unparalleled, a polygiot and a strategic home, and a veritable museum of nature, before they come by "a new treasure due to the Indian mind." Those who have a knack for the pastime of the Opposite Number Game, to use another familiar simile, may be warned at the outset that Mādhaw Kandalī is not an Assamese Kṛttibās, Rām Saraswatī is not an Assamese Kāśīrām, nor Śaṅkardew an Assamese Caitanyadew. They differ as the letters A and B do.

"History of Assam is still at best a half-told tale. Even today it is perhaps the single instance of a province least known and most mis-

•

understood in India itself. But . . . . . when the full text of her political, social and cultural history comes to be recorded, we may be sure, her ancient glories will awaken the admiration, her heroic adventures will fire the imagination and her present struggles will enlist the sympathy not only of India, but of the world outside." *Foreword to Neog's Introduction to Assam—the Country, the People, the Speech*, 1947.

Edward Gait regretted: "In the histories of India as a whole Assam is barely mentioned, and only ten lines are devoted to its analysis in the historical portion of Hunter's *Indian Empire*." Even after a *yuga* of political independence of India, conditions are not much improved. Asam, as Kāmarūpa or Prāgjyotiṣa does not appear to find its place among the ancient kingdoms of India in the *History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. I, Vedic Age, published by the Bhāratiya Vidyā Bhavan, 1951-52, as though Assam were not a part of, but apart from, India.

It is also a fact that Asamiyā people have always fought shy of presenting their case properly; hence they have usually lost by default and have ever been decreed *ex parte*. In a quite few instances where they brought in their case at all, they did it half-heartedly, with hearsay evidence and no eye-witnesses even if there were lots. The so-called histories of Asam are, as a rule, mere chronicles of post-thirteenth century events, and the so-called histories of Asamiyā language and literature sheer talks about post-fifteenth century books and authors. Even an alleged scientific work on Assamese language begins by fits and starts at the middle and is "not a full fledged formation and development" as the author himself confesses. It is because it is now a race of lost self-confidence who cannot believe their own glorious past and are rather frightened by their own shadows. They pride in repeating what has been thought or said of them even wrongly, and think so doing to be scholarship.

On the other hand, as a humble worker for over forty years, I feel constrained to note that even this calm and sacred field of literary research has become of late too vociferous and vitiated by the influx of over-ambitious careerists. Far from disciplining themselves to serious studies and minute observation of facts, they appear to aim at bursting forth overnight by "research" literally (searching again what were already searched and found). It is a pity that even the law court has really no shelter against open piracy: copying of an entire plan of new classifications and sub-classifications, of fresh grouping of authors for discussion, of novel conclusions and findings on topics, and even of copying exact construction of sentences with or without colourable imi-

tations, taken as a whole, is not considered as clear proofs of piracy, as though it were a matter of course. Besides this, coterie leaders emerge every now and then thinking it a divine mandate to pose as authorities, self-constituted though, however pure their ignorance and poor their performance. For these and such reasons, there has been much movement as in a circus ring, but little progress in fact.

Against this background, I embarked on the enterprise of presenting the true literary achievements of the Asamiyā people attempting at showing the manifestation of their national genius with a background of intellectual and social history. Huge as the task had been, it was no sooner executed fifteen years ago than found *mega bibilon mega kakon* (a big book is a big evil). Vast vested interests, about which the lesser said the better, stood in the way and could not be surmounted even by the best help offered by Prof. Chatterji. Then with the advice of Prof. Bloch I have reduced the present volume rather to a history of authors and their books reserving the rest of the matter for a second volume where more will be said about movements and tendencies, currents and cross-currents of thoughts which tended to produce these authors and their books.

As a matter of fact, no literature could ever be read in vacuum; for even a little, but that much real, knowledge of the historical and social surroundings is definitely a pre-requisite for a proper appreciation of the literature, the more so when the atmosphere is dusty and the perspective is wronged already as in case of Asam. In order to secure the correct perspective I had to do the spade-work myself by reconstructing probable situations and fixing important dates; and whenever I had to refer to any of my predecessors in the field, it had been to differ more often than not,—a troublesome and unpleasant task which could not be helped. *Amicus Plato, sed magis amica veritas*. Dear is Plato, but dearer is Truth. And while as a literary critic I am not entitled to any wages for these drudgeries, I have probably myself paid their price already.

Early history and geography of a country may have ordinarily little to do with the history of its literature, but when a vital portion of both the land and literature lies in adverse possession, certainly the historian cannot wink at it. By references to Vedic and pre-Vedic Aryan invasions of ancient Asam the historian may have been thought guilty of invading another's territory, but he is surely acquitted when facts of such invasions are found to have very important bearing on the history of the language and literature of the people. Similarly, it might be warned that origin of language may have no importance in

judging literature and is outside the scope of literary history; but when a considerable portion of the literature is estopped on false grounds of linguistic jurisdiction, a literary history cannot afford to be mute. Any way, these facts are put as Antecedents, outside the pale of the literary history proper, lest any of any learned reader should choose to skip over them.

In my earlier histories I understood the facts and movements of the literature as local, and at most as pan-Indian. Now I realise that they are really universal, and a part and parcel of world movements. Darkness of mediaevalism which enveloped Europe, also enveloped India and Asam; and the flood of light in renaissance that swept over the continent also swept over this sub-continent of India and the country of Asam. So I have now described the history of Asamīyā literature in this new light.

My heartfelt thanks are due to the authorities of G. S. Press, Madras, particularly to its late lamented proprietor, G. Srinivasachari, whose memory I hold so dear to my heart, for printing this book against so many odds. The original typescript was a pre-Independence fact; added to this time factor are the continuous corrections, additions and alterations of matter with numerous pastings of correction slips. On the top of this is the endeavour to make the diacritical marks in old and new typed copies consistent and up-to-date, and what not. Evidently it was almost an ordeal for the Press, and I am happy to say that they have come out quite successfully through it. In the face of it, for any slip in print I have only myself to thank.

I could not do better than assign the notice of some new discoveries and theories that came while my book was in the press to the Appendices, as they may have some permanent interest. The work owes an indebtedness to the Publication Board, Assam, for the exgratia grant and loan of Rs. 5000/- which, however inadequate, has facilitated its publication. My daughters, and students withal in my Jñānāśram (Education Home), Śrīmatī Sapon Madhuri and Jīwan Madhuri, have earned blessings for themselves by preparing the word-index, though I alone am responsible for any imperfection in it. For myself, I would just indulge a small moment in self-gratulation for being able, after all, to find the book in print; but even here I am warned that I must not think it worth while unless it meets approval of my learned readers. *Aparītoṣādviduṣāṃ na sādhu manye prayoga vijñānam.*

March, 1962.

DIMBESWAR NEOG

## CHRONOLOGICAL SYNOPSIS

### BOOK ONE: ANTECEDENTS OF ASAMİYĀ LITERATURE

I. THE LAND OF ASSAM, KAMARUPA, PRAGJYOTISA. Assam, rather ASAM. Kāmarūpa. Prāgjotiṣa. King Śaṅkalādib. The Varman Kings. King Puṣyavarman. Bhākaravarman's challenge. Suzerainty over Bengal. Bhaskar's Empire. Beyond Kāmarūpa. Line of Śālastambha. Pāla kings of Kāmarūpa. Capital Hārūpēśvara Capital Durjayā. Kāmarūpa Nagara. Kamatāpura. Mināvati's City. Kāmatā vs. Kāmarūpa. Kāmarūpa Overlords. King Kumārapāla. Kāmākhyā Pīṭha. Ārimata's line. Muhammadan chroniclers. The Tāi invaders. (pp. 1-25).

II. THE RACE OF ARYAN AND NON-ARYAN ELEMENTS. Earliest settlers. The Asura Civilization. Kumāra as of Brahman caste. The dynasty of Bhagadatta. The Kalitās. The Vedic Aryan civilisation in Assam. Naraka's Aryan descent. Non-Aryan Kings of Prāgjyotiṣa. The earliest Aryan Kingdom. Pre-Vedic Aryan settlement in Assam (pp. 25-37).

III. THE TONGUE, SANSKRIT AND PRAKRIT, AND THE SCRIPT. A major language. Rise of Asamīyā. Indo-European origin. X-pronunciation in Asamīyā. An island of Aryan of Speech (pp. 37-45).

### BOOK TWO: EARLY MEDIAEVAL ASAMİYĀ LITERATURE

I. THE PRELIMINARY FACTS OF THE PERIOD. Historical Summary. Religious Background. Linguistic Peculiarities. (pp. 48-49). II. ORIGINAL OUTBURSTS OF POPULAR POETRY. Folk-songs. Nature Myths. *Maṇikōwarar Gīt*. *Phul Kōwarar Gīt*. A Flower Epic. A Universal Vein. (pp. 49-57). III. BUDDHIST SONGS AND BUDDHISTIC POETRY. *Caryas* or *Dohas*. Language of the Dohas. Time of the Singing Siddhas. Historical Connexions. Vajrāyān disciples. Nāgārjuna and others. Mysticism and Symbolism. Buddhistic influence. *Dehbcārār Gīt*. *Tokārī Nām*. *Dākar Bhaṇitā*. *Dākar Vacan*. Buddhistic suggestion. East India vogue. A dozen discourses. A Vyāsa of the unlettered. Assamese proverbs. Rhythm, accent, alliteration. (pp. 57-83). IV. ŚAKTA POETRY AND SONGS OF ŚAKTA INFLUENCE. The Śākta atmosphere. Bauddha-Tantric contribution. Śaivite influence suggested. Mystic signs and sounds. *Karatis* and *Paṅṣirāj mantras*. Fulbārī, a Śākta centre. *Āi Nām* with alliterative rhyming. (pp. 83-89).

### BOOK THREE: LATER MEDIAEVAL ASAMİYĀ LITERATURE

I. THE PRELIMINARY FACTS OF THE PERIOD. Political changes. Religious struggles. Literary characteristics. (pp. 90-93). II. SONGS OF NATHISM AND DHARMA CULT. *Maināmātīr Gān*. Gorakṣanāth and Nāthism. The Linguistic aspect. Social and Historical aspects. *Śūnya Purāṇ*. (pp. 93-99). III. THE SAHAJIA EPIC OF KṚṢṆA KIRTAN. The Bengali Edition. The Assamese claim. Date of composition. Plan of *Kṛṣṇa Kirtan*. (pp. 99-105). IV. GERMINATION OF RENAISSANCE. Dawning of Asam's Renaissance. Hem Saraswatī. Harihar Vipra. Kaviratna Sarasvatī. Rudra Kandalī. (pp. 105-112). V. MAHAMANIKYA'S PATRONAGE. The *Barāhī* tribe. Mādhaw Kandalī. Translations of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. An Asamīyā Chaucer. Characterization. (pp. 113-121).

## BOOK FOUR: BLOSSOMS OF RENASCENCE IN ASAMĪYĀ LITERATURE

I. THE PRELIMINARY FACTS OF THE PERIOD. Historical Survey. Social Background. Revival of Learning. (pp. 122-125). II. LINGERING MEDIAEVAL SONGS AND EPICS. Epics of Snake-workship. Poet Durgābar. Ojā Pālī Institution. Sukavi Nārāyaṇdew. Sorrows of Kālī Nāg. Saṣṭhibar. Arithmetical, astrological and ethical verses. Bakul Kāyastha. Pagan poetry on the Bhāgawat. An early North-India *Mahābhārat* (pp. 125-136). III. PREPARATIONS FOR THE THEATRE OF RENAISSANCE. Migrations of the Bāra-Bhuyās. Early life of Śaṅkardew. A finished scholar. An early dramatist. A Guru of Gurus. Pilgrimage for twelve years. Surrender of hereditary secular leadership. Early life of Mādhawdew. A scholar in Śākta lore. An epic meeting. The historic debate. Abandoning eastern Asam. Nārāyaṇ *alias* Bhawānanda. Dāmodardew. Śaṅkar-Sūryya and Caitanya-Candra. At Koc Behār. The great end of Śaṅkardew. An unfortunate split. Similar versions. Mādhawdew's leadership. At Kocbehār. Uncompromising votary of truth. The great end of Mādhawdew. (pp. 136-160). IV. THE CREST OF THE TIDE OF RENASCENCE. A BLOOM OF EPICS. Śaṅkardew's earlier works. *Cihna Yātrā*. *Uddhava Sambād*. Bhakti's supremacy. *Orheṣā-varṇan*. *Hariscandra Upākhyān*. *Rukmīṇī Haraṇ Kāvya*. Tremendous popularity. Magical descriptions. The comic and the human elements. *Bhakti Pradīp*. Superiority of Bhakti. *Uttara Kāṇḍa*. Verse-rendering of the *Bhāgawat*. *Anādi Pātan*. *Bṛhat Ajāmīl Upākhyān*. Remains of Śaṅkardew's food. *Bhakti Ratnākar*. *Nimi Nava Siddha Sambād*. *Toṭay*. *Guṇamālā* in Kusum-mālā. B. KIRTAN GHOSA. *Caturvīṃsati Avatār*. *Nāmāparādh*. *Pāṣaṇḍa Mardān*. *Dhyāna-varṇan*. *Ajāmīl Upākhyān*. *Prahlād Carit*. *Gajendropākhyān*. *Hara-Mohan*. *Bali-chalan*. *Śiṣu Līlā*. *Rāsa Kṛidā*. *Kaṃsa badh*. *Gopī-Uddhava Sambād*. *Kubjir Vāñchā Pūrāṇ*. *Akrūrār Vāñchā Pūrāṇ*. *Jarāsandha Badh*. *Kāla-Javan Badh*. *Mucukunda Stuti*. *Syāmantaka Haraṇ*. *Nāradaṛ Kṛṣṇa-Darśan*. *Vipraputra Anayan*. *Datvakīr Putra Anayan*. *Veda-stuti*. *Līlā-Mālā*. *Śrī Kṛṣṇar Vairakūṇṭha Prayāṇ*. C. CRADLE OF ASAMĪYĀ PLAYS AND PROSE. Originality. Differences. The Asamīyā Sūtradhār. Rise of Modern Indian Prose. *Patnī Prasād*. *Pārijāt Haraṇ*. *Nāṭ*. D. RISE OF BARGIT. Śaṅkardew's originality in Philosophy and Literature. (pp. 160-228). V. THE SOLAR SYSTEM OF ASAMĪYĀ RENASCENCE. A. MADHAWDEW'S GREAT CONTRIBUTION. Early works. *Bhakti-Ratnāvali*. *Nām Mālīkā*. *Nām Ghoṣā*. A great literary masterpiece. Spurious works. *Cordharā Nāṭ*. *Pimpārā Gucowā Nāṭ*. *Bhūmī Lotowā Nāṭ*. Suspected Plays. *Bargits*. B. OTHER GREAT LUMINARIES. *Haricaran Ananta Kandali*. *Bṛttāsūr Badh*. *Kumar Haraṇ*. *Ratnākar Kandali*. *Śrīdhar Kandali*. *Kāṅkhowā*. *Anīruddha Rām Saraswatī*. Patronage of king Nara Nārāyaṇ. Autobiographical colophons. Date of Anīruddha. *Bhīm Carit*. C. CONTRIBUTIONS OF MINOR POETS. *Sārva-Bhauma Bhattācāryya*. *Vidyā Pañcānan*. *Rām Saraswatī*, a duplicate. *Kaṃsārī Kāyastha*. *Rāmcaraṇ*. *Gajapati's Dīpikā Candra*. *Anīruddha*, founder of the Māyāmarā sect. *Ratnākar Mīśra*. D. CLOSE OF THE TIDE. *Vaikunṭhanāth Bhattadew*, the last flower of the renaissance. Development of Asamīyā prose. Momentum of the tide. The Māyāmarā upheaval. The Asamīyā Renaissance. (pp. 228-279).

## BOOK FIVE: THE POST-RENAISSANCE ASAMĪYĀ LITERATURE.

I. PRELIMINARY FACTS OF THE PERIOD. Political Summary. Māyāmarā Upheaval. Development in Prose. (pp. 280-283). II. CONTINUANCE OF RENASCENCE LITERATURE. Rendering of the Rāmāyaṇa literature. *Hṛdayānanda alias Ananta Ātā*. *Rām Mīśra*. *Puruṣottam Thakur*. *Rāmānanda Dviija*. *Bhūṣaṇ Dviija*. *Bhavānanda*. *Rāmcandra Barpātra*. *Rāmnāth Mahanta*. *Nārāyaṇdās*. *Kavirāj Cakravartī*. Miscellaneous



works. Religious songs. Raghunāth Mahanta. Various prose works. *Śrī Hasta Mukṭāvalī*. (pp. 283-303). III. DEVELOPMENT OF DIVERSE SECULAR PROSE. Historical prose. Epistolary prose. Sociological prose. Dynastical prose. *Tripurā Burāñjī*. *Tuñkhungā Burāñjī*. Copper-plate prose. *Perā Kākat* prose. Slave-sale prose. *Vaṃśāvalis*. Scientific prose. *Hastī-Vidyārṇava*. *Ghorā-Nidān* (pp. 304-318). IV. FINAL PROGRESS OF ORAL LITERATURE. *Ājān Phakirar Gīt*. Historical enquiry. *Janā Gābharur Gīt*. *Badan Barphukanar Gīt*. Less known ballads. Pastoral songs. Amorous folk-songs. Marriage songs (pp. 318-333).

# BOOK SIX: DISCOVERIES OF MODERN ASAMIYĀ LITERATURE.

I. PRELIMINARY FACTS OF THE PERIOD. Consolidation of Foreign Rule. Lost Self-Confidence. Literary Tendencies. (pp. 334-37). II. GERMINATION OF MODERN PROSE. A.B.M.F. Society. Choice of literary vehicle. Example of Serampore Missionaries. Rev. Nathan Brown. Mrs. Eliza Brown. Dr. Miles Bonson. Nidhi Levi Farwell. Other Missionary writers. (pp. 337-46). III. REALITY OF AN UNREALITY. Day-light night-mare. R. C. Dutta. Moffatt Mills's *Report on the Administration of Assam*. An important Appendix. *A Few Remarks on the Assamese Language by a Native*. Resolution by Lieutenant-Governor of Assam and Bengal. Shameful persistence. Christian contribution. The transition from the old world. (pp. 347-61). IV. DEVELOPMENT OF NON-CHRISTIAN PROSE. Yādurām Baruwā. Halirām Dhekiāl Phukan. Mañirām Dewān. Kāśināth Tāmuli Phukan. Harakānta Baruwā (pp. 361-64). V. TRINITY OF PIONEERS IN MODERN PROSE. Anandarām Dhekiāl Phukan. Evolution of modern prose. Patriotism introduced. Influence of English prose. Hemcandra Baruwā. The Asamiyā Johnson. An unofficial dictator. Guṇābhīrām Baruwā. A tragedy on widow-marriage. Contributions to modern literature. (pp. 364-79). VI. GERMINATION OF MODERN POETRY. Christian and Non-Christian literature. (pp. 379-81). Viśweswar Vidyādhīpa. Dutirām Hāzarikā. Dinanāth Bezbaruwā. Raghunāth Goswāmī. Gopināth Cakravarti. Lalitcandra Goswāmī. Pūrṇakānta Deva Sarmā. Rāmākānta Caudhāri. Baladew Mahanta. Bholānāth Dās. (pp. 381-387). VII. BUDDING OF NEW FORMS OF LITERATURE. Rise of the modern drama. Budding of the novel. Progress of journalism. (pp. 387-89). VIII. PUBLICITY OF OLD CLASSICS. New efforts. Haribilās Āgarwālā. Mādhaw Candra Bardolai. (pp. 389-391). IX. MARVELLOUS JONAKI YUG. *Orunodoi* and *Jonākī*. Later journals. More institutional efforts. Asam Research Society. Asam Students' Conference. Asam Literary Association. Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies. Asam Museum, etc. (pp. 391-96). X. FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN PROSE. Kamalākānta Bhattācārya. Lambodar Barā. Satyanāth Barā. Ratneśwar Mahanta. (pp. 396-400). XI. THEATRE OF ROMANTICISM. A trio of Romantic High Priests. Candrakumār Āgarwālā. An epoch-maker. The humanitarian. The Revolutionist. The metaphysical poet. Lakṣmīnāth Bezbaruwā. Earlier works. A Dickens. A poet in spite of himself. A father of pastoral poetry. A preacher. A humourist. "Rain-bow humour". A reformer. A founder of short stories. An uncrowned king of literature. Hemcandra Goswāmī. First Asamiyā sonnet. Rajanikānta Bardolai. A Walter Scott. Broad human sympathy. Defects as an artist. Durgāprasād Majindar Baruwā. Mañizuddin Ahmed Hāzarikā. Pañindranāth Gogai. Padmanāth (Gohāi) Baruwā. Beṇudhar Rājkhawā. Rajanikumār Padmapati. Anandacandra Āgarwālā. Candradhar Baruwā. Hiteśwar Barbaruwā. Raghunāth Caudhāri Durgēśwar Śarmā. Other prominent writers. (pp. 400-435). XII. RETROSPECTION AND INTROSPECTION. Robust optimists in the counter. Present-day tendencies in general. Output in poetry and songs. New dramas, fictions and short stories. *Belles-Lettres*, criticisms, journalism. (pp. 435-46). APPENDICES. (pp. 447-62). INDEX (pp. 463-64).



IN MEMORIAM  
OF  
MY WIFE  
\* LATE AJALĪTARĀ DEVĪ \*  
(itself a familiar name in the literature)

WHO came from the lap of Luxury and Pride  
to take me up even in my toils;  
WHO made my pinches of Penury and Ostracism  
not only bearable, but even enviable;  
and  
WHO has now left me in the lurch  
with seven small children sweet as herself:  
it is dedicated  
with  
GRATITUDE too high for words,  
and  
REMORSE too deep for tears.

*"Gṛihṇisacivahsakhīmithah priyaśiṣyālalītekalāvidhau  
Karunāvīmukheṇa mṛtyunā haratā tvām vada kiṃ na hṛtam".*

"Now come I, dearest, for my book to claim  
Even so great an honour as thy name."

GAUHATI, ASAM,  
March, 1962. }

DIMBESWAR NEOG

---

\* Birth : 5 December, 1913.

\* Death : 1 November, 1949.

## BOOK ONE

### ANTECEDENTS OF ASAMĪYĀ LITERATURE

#### I. THE LAND AS ASAM, KAMARUPA AND PRĀGJYOTIṢA

ASSAM, rather ASAM, is the state lying on the north-east border of India, enclosed on all sides by other independent States like Bhutān and Tibet on the north, China and Burmā on the east, Burmā on the south and Pākistān on the west. It is surrounded by mountain ranges on as many as three sides; on the north by the Himalayas, on the north-east by the Pātkāi range, and on the east and the south by the hills which merge with those forming the limits of Burmā and Tripurā. Only on the west where it is contiguous with West Bengal and Eastern Pākistān there are no hills. It embraces the whole valley of the Brahmaputra and a portion of the valley of the Surmā together with the range of hills in between them. It lies between latitudes 22° 19' and 28° 16' north and longitudes 89° 42' and 97° 12' east, and contains a total area of 85,012 square miles including 61,979 square miles of hill area. Asam stands in the following position in relation to other States in the Union of India.

States in Indian Union	Area in thousand Sq. miles	Rank in order of area	Population in millions	Rank in order of population	Density per Sq. mile	Rank in order of density
1. Asam ..	85.0	V	9.0	IX	176	VIII
2. Bihār ..	70.3	VI	40.2	III	572	II
3. Bombay ..	111.4	IV	35.9	IV	233	VII
4. Madhya Pradesh ..	130.3	I	21.2	VI	163	IX
5. Madrās ..	127.8	II	57.0	II	447	IV
6. Orissā ..	60.1	VII	14.6	VII	244	VI
7. Punjab ..	37.4	VIII	12.6	VIII	338	V
8. Uttar Pradesh ..	113.4	III	63.2	I	557	III
9. West Bengal ..	30.8	IX	24.8	V	806	I

(Census of India, 1951; Vol. XII, Part IA Ch. I, Secs. I & II, pp. 1 & 21).

The history of the name of the State does not go beyond the sixteenth or seventeenth century. The Vaiṣṇavite writers and biographers appear to have first used the word *Āsām* > *Āsam* > *Asam*; but not in topography. This name was invariably used in referring to the new invaders of the Thāi (Tai) or Śām (Sān) race. It is long after that the name came to mean the country covered by the present districts

of Lakhimpur, Śiwasagar and Nagāon first, and then the districts of Darang, Kāmrup and Goālpār, and finally, in the days of the East India Company and the British, the whole of the Brahmaputra valley together with parts of the Surmā Valley including Śrihatta. The invaders gradually came to be called *Āsam* > *Āham* > *Āhom*. Thus little room is left for the fanciful origin of the name *Āsam* from Sanskrit to mean 'uneven' (earth) or 'unparalleled' (people) as the Thāi invaders or the Śām people must have had less than any others to do with Sanskrit on their first entrance into this land, and so long before they were Hinduised. Considered from the view-point of Assamese morphology, "a-" does not always mean "un-"; *kumārī-akumārī*, *bihane-abhihane*, etc., are definitely synonymous, never antonymous in Assamese, as scholars like Macdonell opine that *sur-asur* were in Rig Vedic times truly synonymous, both meaning 'god'. So *Śām* > *Āśām* > *Āsam* > *Asam* may be not only scientific but also a right and a logical sequence, as the word originally referred to the same race of invaders of the country definitely. It is always admitted that the word was at first correctly written by the British rulers as *Asam*; it is only later that somehow it acquired a wrong spelling as '*Assam*'. Hence the forms *Asam*, pronounced as *Axam*, and *Asamiyā*, pronounced as *Axamiyā*, to mean the land and the people respectively, may be preferred to '*Assam*' and '*Assamese*'. It is on February 24, 1828, by the Treaty of Yāndābu, contracted between the Burmese and the English, that *Asam*, ever independent, so miraculously lost her freedom even from the mighty *Ahom* rulers who just completed the 600 years of their rule, themselves first entering into this country in 1228.

**KAMARUPA:** But the history of the country certainly goes earlier than this date. Vincent A. Smith asserts (*Early History of India*, from 600 B.C. to the Muhammadan Conquest, Ch. III "Kamarupa or Assam", fourth edition, p. 383, quoting from *J.R.A.S.*, p. 879) that the mention of this country as *Kāmarūpa* in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription (Fleet's *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. III, p. 8) among other countries of India as "Samatata-Davāka-Kāmarūpa-Nepāla-Kārtipurādi pratyanta" by Samudragupta, recorded about 360 or 370 A.D., is "the earliest notice of the kingdom" (*Kāmarūpa* or *Assam*) "which is of any use for purposes of the historians". It is further stated that "*Kāmarūpa* was then one of the frontier states outside the limits of the Gupta Empire, but paying tribute and owing a certain amount of obedience to the paramount power". Kālidāsa, flourishing (again on the authority of V. A. Smith) in the first half of the 5th century A.D. refers to this country both as *Kāmarūpa* and *Prāgjyotiṣa* as in "*Cakampetirṇe Lauhitye tasmin Prāgjyotiṣeśwarah*" and "*Tamiśah Kāmarūpanāmātya-khaṇḍala Vikramam*" (*Raghuvamśam*, Ch. IV. vs. 81-83).

Yuān Chwāng, during his travels in India (628-645) refers only to "Kiāmo-leu-po" or Kāmarūpa (Julien's *Hiouen Tshāng*, III, 76), while Rājaśekhara, the court poet of the Pratihāra king Mahipāla (910-940) mentions only Prāgyjyotiṣa along with other countries of Āryāvarta. Again, *Kālikā Purāṇa* (c. 900), like *Raghuvamśa*, not only uses but also explains the origin of the two names, Prāgyjyotiṣa (Ch. XXVIII, 119) and Kāmarūpa (Ch. II, 67). Also Alberuni of the eleventh century in describing the eastern countries of India, writes: "Thence (from Tilwat or Tirhut) we came to the mountains of Kāmru which stretch away as far as the sea". (Alberuni's *India*, p. 201); and in quoting the *Vāyu Purāṇa* from Varāha Mihira, he mentions Prāgyjyotiṣa as a country in the east. Thus it appears that this kingdom was known both as Prāgyjyotiṣa and Kāmarūpa throughout Āryāvarta, at least since the beginning of the Gupta period down to the eleventh century. But earlier still, the country is mentioned mainly as Prāgyjyotiṣa. The *Rāmāyaṇa* (Kiṣkindhyā kāṇḍa, Ch. XLII) refers to Prāgyjyotiṣa as located in the Varuṇālaya, and mentions (Bengal Edition, Ādi Kāṇḍa, Ch. XXXVI) as founded by Amūrtarāja or Amūrtarāya near Dharmāraṇya, (the Bombay Edition, Ādi Kanda, Ch. XXXII, 7) further speaking of its founder. The king of Prāgyjyotiṣa is said to have been invited to and held in high honour in the *jajnas* made by king Raghu, the great grandfather of Rāmacandra of Oudh. The Mahābhārata has even more persistent references to Prāgyjyotiṣa, especially in connection with its king Bhagadatta, the successor of the great Naraka. In the Sabhā Parva (XXVI, 12-13), Bhagadatta styles himself as a friend of Indra whom Naraka encountered. While the Bengali Mahabharata by Kāśirām describes Durjyodhana as marrying Bhānumatī, the daughter of Bhagadatta, the original Sanskrit text (Sabhā Parva, III, 4-14) shows that Durjyodhana first came to know of Bhagadatta from his father Dhṛtarāṣṭra. Any way, Bhagadatta in his extreme old age, fought very gallantly in the Kurukṣetra war for twelve days with a full complement of an ancient army of 109350 foot, 656160 horse, 21870 elephant, 21870 chariot, with a total of 218700 warriors, and was at last killed in the hands of Arjuna (Droṇa Parva, XXVIII, 45). The Sabhā Parva relates how once before, Arjuna encountered with Bhagadatta in the course of the former's conquests on the north, and also (Ch. XXX) how Bhīma came to the land of Lauhitya in his triumphant march to the east from Indraprastha (modern Delhi). The Aśwamedha Parva (Chs. LXXIV-LXXV) too describes the sacrificial horse of the Pāṇdavas entering Prāgyjyotiṣa just on crossing Trigartta (Jalandhara). *Raghuvamśa* (Ch. IV) also mentions the invading army of Raghu as entering Prāgyjyotiṣa in the course of their conquests of the Himalayan territories. The Sabhā Parva again (Ch. XXVI) mentions of Bhagadatta as "Sa

kirataisca Cinaisca vritah Prāgjyotiso'bhavat", and as attending the Rājasūya *jajna* of Yudhisthira, "saha mlecchaih sāgarānupavāsibhih" (XXXIV, 10). Also while Droṇa Parva (XXV, 52) styles Bhagadatta as "Parvatapati" (king of the mountains) and the Sabhā Parva (LI, 15-16) describes the precious stones, only found in the mountainous regions, with the tusks of elephants, horns of rhinoceroses and swift horses, presented to Yudhisthira, the Udyoga Parva (IV, 11) styles him as "Pūrvasāgaravāsi" (inhabitant on the shore of the Eastern Sea).

PRAGJYOTISA: All these references of the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata appear to make the conclusion irresistible that the most ancient kingdom of Prāgjyotiṣa must have embraced at least a portion of China as far as Tibet to its immediate north for making Chinese soldiers available to him, included Bhutān, and verged on the Eastern Sea, mentioned in the Udyoga Parva, which formed the eastern boundary of Āryāvarta described by Manu Samhitā:—"Āsamudrattu bai pūrvādāsamudrattu pascimāt: Tayorevāntaram girjorājyāvartam vidurvudhāh". Mm. Padmanath Bhattacharya opines (*Kāmrup Śāsanāvalī*) that the kingdom of Prāgjyotiṣa stretched as far as the sea towards south-east of China; but Kanaklal Baruwā (*Early History of Kamrup*) asserts that it really points to an Eastern sea formed by the estuary of the Lauhitya with that of the Ganges. Baruwa argues that Greek writers in their accounts mention the islands in the estuary of the Ganges, and the Buddhist Jātakas describe the large sea-going vessels sailing from Champa (modern Bhagalpur) in about the fourth century B.C. This reference includes Megasthenes, the great Greek ambassador of Selucus, residing also at the court of Chandragupta, his reports being preserved to us chiefly in the Indica of Arrian (*The History of Indian Literature* by A. Weber, p. 4, footnote). Ptolemy (Kladios Ptolemios), native of Egypt and resident of Alexandria, the celebrated writer on Greek astronomy in the first half of the second century A.D., in giving an account of the Gangetic plain (Introduction to *Mc Crindle's Ancient India*) says that the Ganges fell into the sea through five mouths, which fact suggests that the delta had then already been formed. This extension of the Gangetic plain, now elevated above the sea-level came to be known as Samatata (a plain on the sea-side), mentioned as visited by Yuān Chwāng in the seventh century, while the portion to the east of Samatata now including southern Mymensingh, western Śrihatta and parts of Kāmalankā (Commilla) and Noākhāli, has been referred to both by Yuan Chwang and Alberuni as then being under the sea. The Bhatera Copper-plate inscription of Govinda Keśava Deva, king of Śrihatta (c. 1049) mentions the sea as one of the boundaries of the land granted by the king (*Epigraphia*

*Indica*, Vol. XIX, pp. 277-86), evidently meaning the Eastern sea. Besides, Amūrtarāja, the founder king of Prāgjyotiṣa, is known to be the son of Kuśa, and grandfather of the sage Viśwamitra who performed his austerities on the bank of the Kauśika (modern Kośī) in the district of Purniā in Bihār. This fact also may show how probably Prāgjyotiṣa embraced some districts of Bihar and was contiguous with old Mithilā (*Early History of Kamarupa*). Like the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, the *Harivaṃśa* and the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (also the *Brahmānda Purāṇa* in mentioning the names of the eastern countries) refers to Prāgjyotiṣa, but not to Kāmarūpa. *Rājatarangini* (Hitabōdī Edition, II, 148-50) mentions Prāgjyotiṣa in connection with the Swayamvara of the princess Amritaprabhā of this country, which Meghavāhana, king of Kasmir, attended; and the reign of Meghavāhana is fixed at about 12 A.D. by Sir Orallstye, the English translator of *Rājatarangini* in his chronological table of Kasmir kings.

**KING SANKALADIB:** From the *History of the Rise of the Mahomedan power in India till the year A.D. 1612*, (translated from the original Persian of Mahomed Kasim Ferishta by John Briggs, Vol. 1 of 1908, pp. lxix-lxx), we learn that Śankalādib one king of old Prāgjyotiṣa became a very powerful monarch of North-Eastern India and established himself by defeating king Kedār Brāhman of Northern India who "laid the foundation and built the fortress of Kalunjar".

"In the latter part of his reign he was attacked by Sunkul, a chieftain of Kooch, who having collected a large force not only subdued Bung (Bengal) and Behar, but also attacked Kedar whom he defeated in several actions and usurped his Empire, after a reign of nineteen years". "Sunkul having ascended the throne, laid the foundation of Lucknowty, in Bengal, since known by the name of Goor or Gowr, which was the capital of the province for 2,000 years, but being destroyed in the time of Mogul empire, Tundra became the seat of the Government". "Sunkul Raja maintained an army of 4000 elephant, 100,000 horse and 400,000 foot". "His downfall is ascribed to Afrasiyab, the king of Turan or Scythia. The original Afrasiyab is believed to have conquered Persia about seven centuries before the Christian era—he appears to have claimed tribute, which Shankal refused to pay. He sent an army of 50,000 Mongols against him, and a fierce battle took place in the mountains of Koch near Ghoraghat. The Mongols were defeated by overwhelming numbers and retreated into the mountains. They entrenched themselves, but were on the point of being annihilated when Afrasiyab hurried up with reinforcements from his capital Gangdozh, beyond the Himalayas and utterly defeated Shankal. The latter retreated first to Lakhanauti and then to the mountains of Tirhut, where he eventually made his submission and was carried away by Afrasiyab" (*Gait's History of Assam*, pp. 19-20).

Śankal is said to have been killed by Rustum who flourished in the seventh century B.C. (J.A.R.S., 1937).

**THE VARMAN KINGS:** The Nidhanpur copperplate of Bhāskar Varmaṇ granting land at Karnaśuvārṇa states that Puṣya Varma ascended the throne of Prāgjyotiṣa after the successors of Vajradatta reigned for three thousand years (v. 7). From all the copperplates discovered and deciphered upto date, mainly from the Nidhanpur inscription (*Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XII, No. 13) of Bhāskar Varmaṇ and the latest discovered and deciphered Dobi Copperplate (*The Times of Assam*, 26th May, 1945) of the seventh century, we find a complete genealogy of eleven generations of Varman kings prior to Bhāskar Varmaṇ, starting with Puṣya Varmā. Now we have the accurate history of Bhāskar Varmaṇ's reign from three different and very reliable sources. They are the copperplate inscriptions of old Kāmarūpa kings, mainly of Bhaskar Varmaṇ himself; the records left by Yuān Chwang of his travels and *Harṣacarit* (Ch. VII) by the great poet Vāṇabhata. According to Vāṇabhata, Bhāskar Varmaṇ's ambassador, Haṃsabega, met Harṣavardhana just on his way to invade Gauḍa whose king, he had heard, killed his elder brother Rājya Vardhana, and tendered Bhāskar's resolve to be friends with Harṣa and gave him Bhaskar's presents. And Harṣa's reign in 606 is well established. Yuān Chwāng writes:

"The reigning king (of Kiamo-leu-po or Kamarupa) who was a Brahmin by caste and a descendant of Narayana Deva was named Bhaskar Varman ("Sun-armour"), his other name being 'Kumara' ('youth'). The sovereignty has been transmitted in the family for 1000 generations". (Watters' Yuān Chwāng, Vol. II, p. 186). Now the time of this Chinese pilgrim's visit of India (628-645 A.D.) and of Kāmarūpa (643 A.D.) is quite a historical fact. So the reign of Bhāskar Varmaṇ is quite well founded. Also on the authority of the old copperplates already referred to, Puṣya Varmā is known to have ruled eleven generations earlier than Bhāskar Varmaṇ. These Varmaṇ kings of Kāmarūpa named in a chronological order are Puṣya Varmā, Samudra Varmā, Vala Varmā, Kalyāṇa Varmā, Gaṇapati Varmā, Mahendra Varmā, Nārāyaṇa Varmā, Mahābhūta Varmā, Candramukha Varmā, Sthira Varmā, Susthita Varmā, and Supratisthita Varmā and Bhāskar Varmaṇ (brothers). These names are found in all the three sources referred to and another source besides. It is the Seal of Bhāskar Varmaṇ found in the ruins of Nalanda giving the names of the Kāmarupa kings from Gaṇapati Varmā to Bhāskar Varmā (*Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Society*; March, 1920, pp. 151-152). Taking a century for every four generations, we find Puṣya Varmā reigning in the middle of the fourth century A.D.

**KING PUṢYA VARMAṆ:** This date of Puṣya Varmaṇ is supported by yet another fact. As the name of Puṣya Varmā himself has a close resemblance with the name Puṣyamitra, the great king of the Sunga dynasty and also with the name of Puṣyabhūti, the first king of the line of Harṣavardhana, so the names of his son Samudravarmā and



his daughter-in-law Dattā Devī bear close similarity with the names of the Gupta Emperor Samudragupta and his empress Dattā Devī, who flourished in the middle of the fourth century A.D. These coincidences were not accidental; but it is quite likely that this Kāmrupa king whose kingdom was certainly outside the pale of the Gupta empire owed some obedience to and was very friendly with the Guptas (Sircar's *Successors of the Sātavāhanas*, p. 176). In the ruins of an ancient temple in a village named Dah Parvatiā near the Tezpur town, late Rakhal Das Banerji discovered an arch which revealed to us the style of Gupta architecture (*Plastic Art of the Gupta Period and its influence on later mediaeval Art, The Bengalee*, March 3, 1925). Again in 1893, a rock inscription, a little to the west of the Tezpur town was found and a photograph of it was sent to Dr. Hoernle for deciphering (*Report on the progress of Historical Research in Assam 1897*, p. 4, para 8). This was subsequently fully deciphered by Haraprasād Śāstrī (*Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, December, 1917, pp. 508-514) with the help of Nagendranāth Vasu (*Social History of Assam*, Vol. I, pp. 159a-b). This was inscribed by Mahārājādhirāj Śrī Harjar Varmā from his capital at Hārūppeśwara and gives the Gupta era 510 (equivalent to 829 or 830 A.D.). Also in another rock inscription in Gupta script, recently discovered at Bargangā in the Mikir Hills in the district of Nagāo, Asam, (*The Barganga rock Inscription of Mahārajadhiraja Bhutivarman* by N. K. Bhattasali, *Journal of the Assam Research Society*, Vol. VIII, No. 4) we find that in the Gupta era 234 (554 A.D.) Āryagūṇa, the Prime Minister of King Mahābhūta or Bhūti Varma, a successor of Samudra Varma, styles his royal master as "Param Bhāgawat". Curious enough, the same epithet "Param Bhāgawat", applied to the contemporary Gupta Kings, appears on the coins of Candragupta II, Kumaragupta and Skandgupta whose dates range from 400 to 460 A.D. (Sir R. G. Bhandarkar's "*Vaishnavism, Saivism, and Minor Religious sects*"). All this shows the extent of imitation of contemporary Gupta culture in this country.

Bhāskarvarman of course survived Harṣavardhana who in 648 was succeeded by his minister Aruṇāswa or Arjuna. The Kingdom of Arjuna was invaded by the Chinese royal ambassador Wang-Hiuen-tsi with a powerful army from Tibet in consequence of being tyrannised by Arjuna when he paid a visit to India. Wang-Hiuen-tsi was much helped by Bhāskar in 649 A.D. and Bhaskar is styled as "Paramount sovereign of Eastern India" in the Chinese annals of this time. The Nidhanpur inscription of Bhāskar Varma, was of course not a new copperplate given by him, but the copperplate of his ancestor Mahābhūta or Bhūti Varmā granted four generations prior to Bhaskar Varma, being burnt and damaged, had thus to be renewed and replaced



(verses 26-28). The name of the Kausika (modern Kosi, in the Purnea district of Bihar frequently appears in regard to the boundaries of the land granted by this inscription (v. 26).

**BHASKARAVARMA'S CHALLENGE:** Harṣavardhana's reign began in 605 when he presently started for invasion of Gauda and met Bhāskar's ambassador just on his way. Yuān Chwāng who came to Kamarupa in 643 found Bhaskar as the reigning king.

"Incidentally we may mention that most of our historians have suppressed the entire episode regarding the manner in which the King of Kāmarupa enforced his invitation on Yuān Chwāng. The facts are as follows: At the time of the receipt of the royal message, asking for the company of Yuān Chwāng at his court, the latter had already made preparations for his return journey. He had been here for a good number of years and although pressed to stay on, he had decided to go back considering it his duty to be back in his country. So the invitation was declined. When it was declined a second time, the Kumāra sent a personal message asking for the Chinese traveller, saying "If necessary, then I will equip my army and elephants, and like the clouds sweep down on and trample to the very dust that monastery of Nalanda. These words (are true) as the Sun. (*Life*, Bk. V)". (Quoted from *The Journal of the Ganganath Jha Research Institute*, "Short note on Harṣa" by Deva Raj, vol. X, pts. 1-4, p. 64).

"According to Yuān Chwāng, Harṣa had 5,000 elephants, 2,000 cavalry and 5,000 foot soldiers. After six years he had subdued the Five Indies. Having thus enlarged his territory, he increased his forces. He had (now) 60,000 elephants (war) and 1,00,000 cavalry" (*Records*, I-V).

Bhāskar's friendship with Harṣa seems to have been based on the distinct purpose of launching a joint attack on Śaśānka (Narendra Gupta, illustrious as the king of Gauda in the Harṣacarita) whose predecessor Mahāsenā Gupta defeated Bhāskar's father, Susthitavarmā (*Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. III, p. 203). Harṣa very gladly accepted this offer, for he too was aggrieved in as much as his elder brother Rājyavardhana was killed by this king of Gauda, and he already started for an invasion of his enemy's kingdom. The message (*Harṣacarita* ch. III, pp. 585-86) sent by Bhaskar to Harṣa through his ambassador, Hamsavega, is also significant. Śaśānka (Narendra Gupta) made an attempt to attack Magadha in order to destroy the Buddhist monuments at Patna and Gayā but Harṣa Vardhana or Śilāditya of Thāneswar after making friends with Bhāskar Varmaṇ, "the paramount sovereign of Eastern India" gave an united front and opposed Śaśānka quite successfully. Harṣa Vardhana occupied Magadha, and Bhāskar Varmaṇ conquered Gauḍa and Karṇa Suvarṇa. Thus, besides Kāmarupa of Purānic descriptions, Bhāskar Varmaṇ became the Supreme Lord of Karṇa Suvarṇa, Śrīhatta, Samātata and Puṇḍra Vardhana.

YUAN CHWANG travelled in Bengal about 638 after the death of king Śaśānka which occurred in 625. He mentions four kingdoms of Bengal, viz. Puṇḍra Vardhana, Karna Suvarṇa, Samatata, and Tāmralipta (Watters II, 182-193; *Beal-Records* II, 193-204), besides Kajangala, the territory round Rajmahal. Puṇḍra Vardhana and Karna Suvarṇa were certainly the two integral parts of the kingdom of Śaśānka and must have embraced North and North-western Bengal, namely, the districts of Burdwan, Bīrbhūm, Murshidābād and Nadiā. Yuān Chwāng, though mentioning the names of the capitals of each of the kingdoms, says nothing about their king; for, by this time, "he found most of them included in Harsha's own dominion and some in that of Bhāskar Varman" (R. G. Basak, *H.N.I.*, 227). The Nidhanpur copper-plate proves beyond doubt that Bhāskar Varman even seized the capital city of Śaśānka and made this grant from the victorious camp at Karna Suvarṇa. It is further supported by other facts narrated in the *Life of Yuān Chwāng*. It is related there that about 642 A.D. Bhāskar Varmā started to meet Harsha Vardhana at Kajangala near Rajmahal. "Kumara ... immediately ordered his army of elephants 20,000 in number to be equipped and his ships 30,000 in number. Then embarking with the Master of the Law (Yuān Chwāng) they passed together in order to reach the place where Siladitya was residing" "returning from his attack on Kongyodha" ... Siladitya seeing him (Kumara) coming was overjoyed". (*The Life of Hiuen Tsiang* by the Shaman Hwuici, Edited by Samuel Beal, Popular Edition, 1914, p. 172).

**SUZERAINTY OVER BENGAL:** But this passage of Bhāskar's army and ships through Bengal and even his grant at Nidhanpur is interpreted by some as his ally Harṣa's suzerainty over Bengal (*History of Bengal*, vol. I, ch. V. "*Political Disintegration after Sasanka*" by R. C. Majumdar, pp. 77-85). It is rather absurd to think that a king of Bhāskar's prestige could issue a royal edict from a place which belonged to another king of Harṣa's status. Besides, Bhāskar's effective suzerainty over Bengal by 648 is further proved by the Chinese chroniclers, who in connexion with the expedition of Wang-hiuen-tse definitely refers to Bhāskar as king of Eastern India (*ibid*). It is also related in the *Life of Hiuen Tsiang* that "at the time of this meeting, Harsha himself had just returned from his victorious campaign at Kongoda, (*Beal-Life*, 172) the kingdom of the Sailodbhavas who formerly acknowledged the suzerainty of Śaśānka" (*ibid*.)

Yuan Chwang divides Eastern India into six kingdoms, namely, Kāmarūpa, Samatata, Tāmralipti, Karna-suvarṇa, Odra and Ganjam (Sir Alexander Cunningham's *Ancient Geography of India*, p. 572). But the records of the Chinese traveller makes it clear that there were at least "eighteen countries of the five Indies" besides those of Bhāskar and Harṣa themselves.

"There were present kings of eighteen countries of the five Indies; three thousand priests thoroughly acquainted with the Great and Little Vehicle, besides about three thousand Brahmans and Nirghanthas and

about a thousand priests of the Nalanda monastery. All these noted persons alike celebrated for their literary skill, as for their dialect, attended the assembly with a view to consider and listen the sounds of the Law; they were accompanied with followers, some on elephants, some in chariots, some in palanquins, some under canopies: Then Siladitya Raja, under the form of Lord Śakra with a white chowrie in his hand went on the right; and Kumara Raja under the form of Brahma Raja with a precious parasol in his hand, went to the left. They both were tiaras like the Devas, with flower wreaths and jewelled ribbons". (*The Life of Hiuen Tsiang*, Hwui Li and Beal, p. 176). "On this the king (Harsa) ordered them ("Kings of eighteen centuries of the five Indies") to offer him ("the Master of the Law of China") gold coins and other things; Kumāra Raja also bestowed on him every sort of valuable. But the Master would take none except from Kumāra Raja he accepted a cap called ho-la-li, made of coarse skin lined with soft down which was designed to protect from rain while on the road." (*Ibid.*, p. 189).

**BHASKAR'S EMPIRE:** Gait comments on this as follows:—

"It (the kingdom of Bhaskar Varman) was at any case far larger than the adjoining kingdoms of Paundra Vardhana, and Samatata, the circumferences of which are placed at only 700 and 500 miles respectively," against 1700 miles of Kāmarūpa. "The King (Bhāskara) was evidently a monarch of considerable power, and he seems to have taken rank above all the twenty Rajas who accepted Silāditya's invitation to Kajughira; in the great procession there Siladitya himself led the way on the left, dressed as Shakra (Indra) while Bhaskar Varman personated Brahma Raja and occupied the corresponding position on the right. Both he and Siladitya had an escort of 500 elephants clad in armour!" (H. A., Rev. Ed.) From Beal's *Buddhist Records* (Vol. II, p. 195) we find:—"The country of Kāmarūpa is about 10,000 li or 1667 miles" (Cunningham's *Ancient Geography*, p. 572,—"nearly 1700 miles") in circuit. The capital town is about 30 li." On this point Sir Edward Gait observes: "As its circumference was 1700 miles, it must have included whole of Assam, (except perhaps the Naga Hills, Lushai Hills and Manipur) and also Bhutan, North Bengal as far west as the Karatoya and the part of Mymensingh which lies to the east of the old course of the Brahmaputra." (Gait's *H. A.*). But this must have been the area of Kāmarūpa proper, without taking the new conquests into any account.

The name Kumāra often used by Yuān Chwāng and Bāṇa Bhatta in quite different sources, as a synonym for Bhāskara Varma, may show that like Bhisma, he remained a confirmed bachelor. That there had been change in the line soon after Bhaskar Varman in the kingdom of Kāmarūpa is evidenced by slokas of the first copperplate inscription of king Ratnapāla. King Brahmapāla, referred to in the inscription, is the father of king Ratnapāla and Hoernle fixes the first half of the eleventh century as the time of the inscription (*Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Part 1, No. 1, 1898, p. 102). Again this copper plate of Ratnapāla was given by him in the twenty-fifth year of

his reign (v. 20), while his second copperplate was given in the twenty-sixth year of his reign (v. 20). From these data we may then easily ascertain that king Ratnapāla must have ruled about the close of the tenth or in the early part of the eleventh century, and that his father Brahmapāla must have reigned in the latter half of the tenth century. Once again, Brahmapāla ascended the throne of Kāmarūpa after Tyāgasimha, the twenty-first king of the line of Mlecchādinātha Śālastambha, who died without leaving any progeny (Ratnapāla's first inscription, v. 10). Taking even seven generations for a hundred years, Śālastambha's reign comes to seventh century. Further, Harjar Varma, one great king of the line of Śālastambha has his reign distinctly recorded in the Tezpur rock inscription as 510 Gupta era (829 or 830 A.D.).

**BEYOND KAMARUPA:** The stone inscription of Jayadeva, king of Nepal, inscribed in "a slab of black slate...placed behind the bull opposite to the western door of the temple of Paśupati" (*Indian Antiquary*, Vol. IX, p. 178) clearly states that Rājyamati whom king of Nepal, Jayadeva, married was a princess of the royal line of Bhagadatta and daughter of Sri Harṣadeva who was not only a famous Kāmarūpa king of the royal line of Bhagadatta but also the Supreme Lord of Gauḍa, Odra, Kalinga and Kośala, etc., including the modern provinces of Bengal, Orissa, Behar and Ganjam, besides the country of Kāmarūpa (as described by Yuān Chwāng, for example) proper. Sylvan Levi decided that this inscription was dated 153 years in the Tibetan era, equivalent to 748 A.D. (*Le Nepal*, Vol. ii, p. 170).

The fact (*Early History of Kāmarūpa*, p. 114) of one Kāmarūpa prince, Khemankara Deva being installed as king of Orissa by Śrī Harṣa Deva, Rājādhirāja of Kāmarūpa, when the latter conquered Odra about the middle of the eighth century is supported by scholars like R. D. Banerji (*J.A.R.S.*, Vol. VIII, No. 4, p. 137). Also an Eastern Ganga Copperplate grant found in the Sudava village in Parlākimedi Estate in the Ganjam district of the Madras Presidency (*Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XXVI, April, 1941, pp. 62-68), granted by Maharaja Ananta Varman, son of Mahārājādhirāja Devendra Varman and dated in the Ganga year 204, the donee, was a learned scholar Viṣṇusomācārya who hailed from Śringatikagrahāra (Singari in the present Darang district) in Kāmarūpa. From paleographical considerations the inscription is assigned to the last quarter of the seventh or the first quarter of the eighth century.

**LINE OF ŚALASTAMBHA:** A genealogy of Kāmarūpa kings of the line of Śālastambha sketched with the help of the inscriptions of Harjar, Vanamāl, Vala Varmā and Ratnapāl, stands as (*Kāmrūp Rājāvali*,

pp. 20-21): Śālastambha; Vijaya; Vighrahasambha; Pālaka; Kumāra; Vajra Deva; Harṣa Varma (or Sri Hariṣ); Valavarma; unknown; unknown; Cakra; Arathi; Arath; Pralambha; Harjar; Vanamāla; Jayamāla; Vala Varman; unknown; Śrī Tyāgasimha. By examining the script of king Valavarmā of this line, Dr. Hoernle opines (*Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. LXVI, 1897, part II) that the inscription belongs to 975 A.D. which date roughly agrees with the date of this genealogy.

**PALA KINGS OF KAMARUPA:** Brahmapāla immediately succeeded to the throne of Kāmarūpa after Tyāgasimha in the latter half of the tenth century. Brahmapāla of Bengal also is the founder of the Pāla dynasty of Gauda two centuries earlier; and both the founders are known to have been elected by the people. The genealogy then of Pala kings is (*Kāmarūp Rājāvalī*, p. 24): Brahmapāla; Ratnapāla; Purandarapāla; Indrapāla; Gopāla; Harṣapāla; Dharmapāla.

There appears to be no direct reference in the Epics as to the capital of Prāgjyotiṣa, but from the *Kālikā Purāṇa* (Ch. XXXVI-XL) we know that Nārāyaṇa when desired by his consort, the Earth, appeared presently before her and her son Naraka (then in his sixteenth year), immersed with them in the Ganges and came to where Kamakhya was located, in Prāgjyotiṣapura. There Narayana got Ghataka, the Kirata king killed by Naraka who in turn was crowned as king of Prāgjyotiṣa. There is no direct or indirect reference in any inscription of the Kāmarūpa kings to the capital of Naraka or Bhagadatta or even of Bhaskar till we come to the Nagāo copperplate of Valavarma III (cir. 900 A.D.) which describes (v. 5) that Prāgjyotiṣapura where Naraka lived or had his capital, was full of areca nut trees and betel vines, etc. And the Asamiya words "Guā" (derived from the Sanskrit word Guvāka, meaning "areca nut" and its plant) and 'Hāṭi' (derived from Hāṭṭa or hāṭa 'market' and having the secondary meaning 'row' or 'line') also mean a place with large rows of betel-nut plants.

The two copperplates (Baragāo and Soālkuchi inscriptions) of king Ratnapāla also makes mention of this residence or capital of Naraka (v. 5 in each) as "Prāgjyotiṣe vasadasau pravare purāṇām" as also the two copperplates (Gauhati and Guakuchi inscriptions) of Indrapāla (v. 6 in each). Even the first two copperplates (the Khanāmukh and Śubhankarapataka inscriptions) of Dharmapāla refer to the city of Prāgjyotiṣa (v. 2).

Curiously enough, Wade's *Accounts* points to the exact location of Prāgjyotiṣpur (present Gauhati) and how it came to be the seat of Empire of the immediate predecessor of Naraka: "The race of Khumburakhoor (Sambarāsūr), descended from Brahma, sat on the throne at Rungamatie (at Goalpara). Khumburakhoor was succeeded by his

son Mohirung (so familiar in current tradition) who removed the seat of Empire to the Meihir Khoohur (probably the one now known as Narakasur) mountain in the off province of Beltola, his son Guttakakhoor (Ghatakāsūr) established his royal residence to the west of the Khoronia (Śaraṇīā) mountain. Bisnoo (Viṣṇu) having destroyed the latter placed Nurukakhoor (Narakāsūr) in the Government about the middle of the Treta Zoog. At the commencement of Colizoog Krishna-deo displeased with the conduct of Nurukakhoor, put him to death and established his son Bhugudutt on the throne; the latter perished in the wars of the Pandoos and Kouros".... (p. 179: the suggestions within bracket are all mine. D.N.).

**CAPITAL HARUPPESWARA:** It appears that as the throne of Prāgyotiṣa Kāmarūpa passed from the hands of the king of the direct Naraka line to the hands of the Mlecchādhinātha Śālastambha, the capital town also shifted from Prāgyotiṣapura to Hārupperwara. But we cannot ascertain when it truly took place nor where it was exactly located. From the following references found in the copperplates of Harjar, Vanamala and Valavarma it seems almost clear that it was situated on some bank of the Brahmaputra. The Tezpur rock inscription of Harjarvarmā makes it almost clear that it was situated somewhere near the present Tezpur town on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra. It is further supported by the fact that king Valavarmā in his Nagāo inscription definitely assigns the land granted to him to be on the southern bank (v. 26): "Dakṣinākula Dijjinaṣayantahpatino", etc. This particular reference to the "dakṣinākula" probably implies with certainty that the king resided or had his capital town on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra.

**CAPITAL DURJAYA:** Harjar's Hāiyunghāla copperplate inscription has a direct reference (v. 15) to his capital town, Harupperwara, as also the one of his son, king Vanamala, (v. 30). Even the Nagāo copperplate inscription of Vanmāla's grandson, Valavarmā III, has ample reference to his capital which, he says, was also the capital of his forefathers (v. 25-26). But when the line of Śālastambha ceased with its twenty-first king Sri Tyāgasimha and Brahmapāla started the line of Pāla kings in Kāmarūpa in about the latter half of the tenth century, there appears to have been another change of capital from Hārupperwara, which is apparent from the Bargāo (also the Sualkuchi) inscription (lines 39-40). That this new capital, Durjayā, (the impregnable city) was worth its name is proved by its descriptions in the first copperplate (lines 34-36) of Ratnapāla of repulsion of the fierce foes as the Saka king and the rulers of Gurjara, Gauda, Kerala (Malavar), Vahika, Tayika and also of the king of Dakṣinātya (the Deccah). Dur-



jaya has also been referred to as such in both the copperplates of Indrapāla (v. 1).

That Durjayā was situated on the south bank of the Brahmaputra can be understood from its references to the Lauhitya and to the special mention of the north bank ('uttarakule') in the copperplates of Ratnapāla (l. 52) and Indrapāla (l. 35) where their lands were granted, just as we find the mention of the Southern Bank ("dakṣiṇakule") in Valavarma's inscription (l. 35) when the capital was on the north bank at Haruppeswara. The second inscription of Indrapāla is conspicuous by the absence of any reference as to the bank on which it was situated, and it is significant. This is accounted for by saying that no mention of it was deemed necessary the land being located on the bank on which the capital itself was situated. This second inscription which is the same as the first upto the middle of the fifty second line of the former, ending with "Sri Ratnapāla Varmadeva Kusāli", just begins: "Kalangavisayāntahpati.....bhumau" in the place where the first inscription starts "uttarakule", etc. The Kalang is a tributary of the Brahmaputra flowing from the south and "Uttarakūle" most probably refers to the grant being located about the Kalang.

Now, Brahmapāla whose reign is fixed in the latter half of the tenth century was succeeded by his son Ratnapāla whose two copperplates bestowed in the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth years of his reign show that he must have ruled for nearly thirty years. Ratnapāla's son was Purandarapāla to whom is ascribed the authorship of *Nitikusum*, a rendering of the Sanskrit work *Śukranīti* in the then Kāmarūpi speech. He is referred to in both the copperplates of his son, Indrapāla (vs. 11-13) as "Purandarapalah sunuh śurasca sukavisca", which shows that he was not only virtuous and heroic, but was also a great artist and poet; and he married Durlabhā who was the princess of a king who enjoyed his kingdom as acquired by Jamadagnya (Parasurama). But we are left in dark as to who this king was and which kingdom he possibly ruled. In the same inscriptions (lines 32-35) we also find that Indrapāla succeeded his grandfather Ratnapāla. It evidently proves that Purandarapāla died before he succeeded to the throne of his father, and also that Indrapāla must have come to the throne early in life and consequently reigned long like George III. At any rate Indrapāla must have reigned in the middle of the eleventh century, and his son Gopāla and grandson Harṣapāla in the latter half of that century. So the reign of king Dharmapāla, son of Harṣapāla, may be placed in the first half of the twelfth century. (*Kamarup Rajavali*).

**KAMARUPA NAGARA:** Three copperplate inscriptions of king Dharmapāla have been possessed upto date, the latest discovered one being the Khanāmukh (Nagāo, Asam) grant (J.A.R.S., VIII, 4, October, 1941). The first grant bestowed in the first year of his reign (verse 7) and the second, allotted in the third year of his reign (verse 21, lines 47-48) are silent in regard to the capital city of Dharmapāla which could ordinarily be explained away by saying that no mention of it was deemed necessary since Durjayā still continued to be its capital. But the third copperplate, which is unfortunately not dated, definitely names the city as Kāmarūpa Nagara (verse 20). Neither the site of this new capital nor the cause nor the time of it being shifted has yet been definitely known. Still less we know about its author. Mm. Padmanāth thinks that the capital must have been changed sometime before Dharmapāla came to the throne, since he would certainly have mentioned of it had it occurred during his reign (*Kāmrūp Rājāvalī*, pp. 19 & 28). Whatever time or whatever site it might be, it seems certain that it was never on the bank of the Brahmaputra since even the slightest reference to it is not found in the three inscriptions of Dharmapāla, while all the inscriptions are eloquent in descriptions of the same river when the capital was seated either at Hārūpeśwara on the north or at Durjayā on the south bank of the Brahmaputra. Again, we have not been able to adduce sufficient proof as to where the capital of the kings of the line of Bhagadatta was actually situated, even in the reign of Bhaskar in the seventh century A.D. If we could know it we could find the probable site of the capital of Dharmapāla too, since these Pāla kings of Kāmarūpa claim to have resumed their reign by belonging to the line of Bhagadatta direct after the usurping line of Mlechhādhinātha Śālastambha became extinct (Ratnapāla's inscriptions, verses 9-10).

**KAMATAPURA:** Alexander Cunningham says:—"From Paundra Vardhana or Pubna, in middle India, the Chinese pilgrim proceeded 900 li or 150 miles to the east, and crossing a great river entered kia-ma-leu-po or Kāmarūpa .... (Julien's *Hien Tsiang* 111, 76)". "Now Kamatapura, the capital of Kuca Vihara is exactly 150 miles or 900 li from Pubna ... while Gohati (said to have been the old capital of Kāmarūpa) is about twice that distance or say 1900 li or 317 miles from Pubna ... As the position of the former agrees exactly with the distance recorded by the pilgrim it is almost certain that it must have been the capital of Kāmrūp in the seventh century ... The great river crossed by the Pilgrim would therefore be the Tista and not the Brahmaputra ... On the south-east the forests were full of wild elephants which is still the case at the present day". (*Ancient geography*, edited by S. N. Majumdar Sāstrī, 1924, pp. 572-73).

King Dharmapāla is well known to us through the early biographies of Śankardew composed about the close of the sixteenth cen-



tury in connexion with his battles and subsequent peace with king Durlabha Narayana, which fact in turn was responsible for the migration of Candivara, the forefather of Śankardew, to Kāmarūpa. Ultimately through a curse of the goddess Kāmākhyā Dharmapāla left his own kingdom which was then amalgamated by Durlabhnarayana in his own kingdom and this capital of Durlabh lay at a distance of nine hours' journey or walk from Koc Behar. (Ramcaran's *Śankar Carit* (Ch. IV, vs. 2572-78). This king Durlabhanārāyaṇa too is an extremely well known figure and a great patron of learning referred to by many pre-Vaiṣṇavite poets of Kāmarūpa who resided in his kingdom. So it appears that Kamatā and Gauḍa were then contiguous kingdoms ruled by kings of Kāmarūpa.

EPIGRAPHIA INDICA (July, 1954) says—"A late tradition seems to suggest that, in the narrow sense, Gauda indicated only the small area lying to the south of the Padma and north of the Burdwan region .... Thus the present district of Murshidabad together with southern part of Malda may have been the original Gauda.... At a later date the name of Gauda was applied to the whole of western half of Bengal and still later to the entire Bengali-speaking area (cf. *Ind.-Cult.* VIII, 56-57).

MINAVATI'S CITY: Again, Dr. Buchanan Hamilton who as early as 1809 came to visit the ruins of Kamatapura records:—"Dharmapala's city, about two miles from a bend in the Tista, a little below Dimla (in Rangpur District) are the remains of a fortified city, said to have been built by Raja Dharmapala... It is in the form of a parallelogram, rather less than a mile in length ... and about half a mile in breadth... Dharmapal had a sister-in-law, Mainavati, the remains of whose fort still exist on the west bank of the Deonai river about two miles west from Dharmapala's fort... At some distance from the south of this existed a circular mound of earth called Hariścandrapāt... I have no doubt that this is a tomb probably that of Harichandra whose daughter was married to Gopichandra, the son of Mainavati, and who succeeded his uncle Dharmapala in his government." (*Hunter's Statistical Account of Kuch Behar*, pp. 360-2). Also, "Towards the east side is a small square heap which is said to have been the temple of the goddess Kamateswari which is extremely probable". (P. 365) "Hindu tradition has it that on the fall of the city, the fortunate amulet of Bhagadutta retired to a pond"... (p. 368-9). Thus we find that Kamatāpura, the ruins of which city lies at a distance of fourteen miles to the southwest of the later capital at the present Kuch Behar state, was in all probability the Kāmarūpa Nagar the seat of Dharmapāl's government in the twelfth century. That the same site might also be the capital of Bhāskarvarmā is suggested by the reference contained in it to the tradition of "the fortunate amulet of Bhagadutta". And this is confirmed by Sir Alexander Cunningham's conclusion that from the details given by Yuān Chwāng it must have been the capital at Kamatāpura that this Chinese pilgrim visited and not Gauhati (ancient Pragjyotiṣapura) which might be the earliest capital. Conquests of Bengal, Behar, Orissa, and Ganjam, and consequent extension of Kāmarūpa to

the west in the reigns of Bhaskar, Śrī Harṣa (and even upto the reigns of the Pāla kings till the twelfth century) might be responsible for this shifting of capital. And the change of capital to Hārupperwara and Durjayā in between the reigns of Bhāskar and the Pāla kings seems to be accounted for by the usurpation of Śālastambha and his line (verses of Ratnapala's inscriptions).

**KAMATA VS. KAMARUPA:** Still more, the Muhammadans who came to India at the beginning of the thirteenth century knew this country as Kāmruḍ or Kāmru. But later Muhammadan chronicles used to refer to this country both as Kāmruḍ and Kāmatā. In *Ayin-Akbari* (11,3) we definitely find "Kāmruḍ, which is also called Kāmtah" etc. Sir Edward Gait also corroborates the same view when he writes "At the period with which we are now dealing, the whole tract upto the Karatoya seemed still, as a rule, to have formed a single kingdom, but the name had been changed from Kāmarupa to Kāmatā. The Muhammadan historians sometimes speak as if the terms Kāmarupa and Kāmatā were synonymous and applicable to one and the same country" (*History of Assam*, Ch. 111, pp. 42-43). Even the Maldah Madrasa inscription and the recently discovered Kantaduwar Inscription of Hussain Shāh contain both the names Kāmatā and Kāmaru as if they are synonymous (*Kamarupa Rājāvali*, p. 31 footnote). In all probability, 'Kāmatā', is a corruption from 'Kāmadā' which is a synonym for Kāmākhyā who is also called Kāmarūpā (*Kalika Purana*, 64-73), other synonyms appearing together in a single verse of the Kalika Purana (62, 2). Kāmākhyā is also called Kāntesvari; and curious enough, the great fortress of Kāmatāpura is called Kāntesvar Garh. The copperplate grant of Vanamala mentions "Śrī Kamesvara Mahagauri" etc. (v. 30) and the second copperplate grant of Indrapala gives similar reference "Mahāgauri Kamesvarayoh" etc. (v. 26). All the copperplate inscriptions testify that the kings of Kāmarūpa down to the twelfth century were worshippers of Kāmadā or Kāntā (perhaps both the words confused and corrupted to Kāmatā) or Kānteswarī (Kāmākhyā) and Kānteswara (Śiva); and wherever they founded their capital they possibly established symbols (Yantra) of Kānteswari and Kānteswara (Hārupperwara might be such a name of their god or his symbol) for worship. So it is no wonder if their last capital Kāmruḍ Nagar was later on called Kāmatā by the name of their Goddess Kāmadā (Kāmākhyā). Similarly, Kāmateswar or Kānteswar (literally, Lord of Kāmatā (Kāmatā or Kānta) rather refers to the god than to the king.

In the Silimpur inscription (*Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XIII, v. 22, p. 292) one Kāmarūp king Jayapala, has been mentioned, simply to prove the spirit of sacrifice of one Prahāsa who even declined to accept

the offer of 900 gold coins and a grant of land yielding one thousand 'dronas' of paddy in connexion with the Tulā-puruṣa gift of this Kāmarūpa king. But there is no knowing when he ruled nor is there any room for his reign in between Brahmapāla and Dharmapāla having definite epigraphic records of their reigns. So it is surmised that he must have ruled after Dharmapāla being his son or grandson (*Kāmrūp Rājāvalī*, p. 36) King Jayapāla's name further appears in a verse in a manuscript, *Chandogapariśiṣhtaprakasha*, preserved in the India office, London (*Ep. Ind.* XIII, p. 289). "Kshmapāla Jayapālatah sa" etc. From internal evidences put forward by Mm. Padmanath (*Kāmrūp Rājāvalī*, pp. 36-38) both these records may be assigned to the middle of the twelfth century which must have been the time of Jayapāla. He seems as liberal, powerful and virtuous as his worthy predecessor Dharmapāla from the inscription and manuscript referred to above. No other epigraphic records, local or foreign, copperplates or rock inscriptions, are known to have mentioned any other Kāmarūpa king.

**KAMARUPA OVERLORDS:** Thus we may be certain that at least up to the middle of the twelfth century or till the reign of the Pāla kings, the successors of Bhāskar Varmā kept the prestige of their worthy forefathers in tact. That Kāmarūpa kings retained the overlordship of the bordering kingdoms is proved by Harjarvarmā's inscription (v. 12) and others. This glorious position was not only enjoyed by Harṣavarman in the middle of the eighth century, but it seems to have continued till the reigns of Dharmapāla and Jayapāla (*Kāmrūp Rājāvalī*, p. 29). Here and there we find other kings of India said to have launched aggressions against kings of Kāmarūpa. For example, in the Bhagalpūr copperplate inscription of Nārāyaṇadēva is mentioned "Rājā Prāgyotishāṇām" (*Gauda Lekhāmālā*, p. 58) in connexion with the march of Jayapāla, the brother and general of king Dēvapāla Dēva of Gauḍa, for universal conquest of the former. The then reigning king of Kāmarūpa is reckoned to be either Jayamāla (Viravāhu) or Valavarma, as Dēvapāla's reign is fixed in the latter half of the ninth century (*Kāmarūp Rājāvalī*, pp. 23-24).

Dr. Hoernle opines:—"Of Ratnapāla it is related that he came into hostile contact with the kings of Gurjara, Gauḍa, Kerala and the Deccan, and with the Bahikas and Taikas. Assuming that Ratnapāla's age has been rightly fixed at about 1010 to 1050 A.D. the king of Gurjara at that period would be the western Chālukya king Jayasimha III or Somesvara I. By the Kerala king the Chōla Rajarāja is perhaps intended. The Gauḍa king may have been Mahipāla or Nyayapāla of the Pāla dynasty of Bengal and Behar. To whom the term "king of Dakshinatya or the Dekkan" may refer I do not know. The Bahikas and Taikas are generally taken to be Trans-Indus people—those of Balḥ and the Tajiks". (*J.A.S.B.* part 1 No. 1 of 1898,

p. 105). This is of course based on Ratnapāla's first inscription (lines 34-36) describing the capital, Durjayā.

**NO CONQUESTS OF KĀMARŪPA:** The *Vikramāṅka Carita* (Ch. III, v. 74) by Vihlana records:—"Tasyonmulita Kāmarūpanripati Prājya-pratapasriyaḥ" etc. in connexion with the conquests of the eastern countries by Karnatendu Vikramanka, the Cālukya prince, during the reign of his father (1040-1071 A.D.). Either Indrapāla or his son Harṣapāla must have ruled in Kāmarūpa about this time, and this must have had no lasting effect in the kingdom of Kāmarūpa. Also in the Velava inscription of Bhōjavarman, ruler of Vikramapura and in a verse in connexion with his grandfather, Jata Varma, reference is found of Kāmarūpa (*Inscriptions of Bengal*, Vol. III, p. 20): "Yongeṣu prathayaśriyam paribhavamstām Kāmarūpaśriyam". This has been explained by late Rakhal Das Banerji as Jatavarman conquering the countries of Aṅga and Kāmarūpa (*Bāṅgālār Itihās*, pt. 1, 2nd ed., p. 277). But Mm. Padmanāth conclusively proves that the verse as it stands cannot mean so and there being pun on the words 'anga' and 'Kāmarūpa' the verse simply means that such beauty ('sriyam') was manifested in Jatavarman's limbs ('angeṣu') that by it even the beauty of Cupid ('Kāmarūpa sriyam') was vanquished (*Kāmrūp Rājāvalī*, p. 39). In support of his standpoint he refers to another verse (16) from the rock inscription of Jayadeva, king of Nepal, (*Indian Antiquary*, Vol. IX, p. 179):

"Angaśriya parigato jita Kāmarūpah Kanchigunādyavanitābhirupāsyamanah" etc. So the conquest of Kāmarūpa by Jatavarman is baseless.

*Rāmacarita* by Sandhyakar Nandi, refers on more than one occasion to the conquest of Kāmarūpa by Rāmapāla, king of Gauḍa in such lines as, "Tasya jita Kāmarūpādi viśayavinivṛttamānasampādyā" 3/47. "Vigrahanirjita Kāmarūpabhut" 4/5. The relevant (v. 13) in Vaidyadeva's inscription (*Gauḍa Lekhamālā*, p. 131): "Etadriśo HariHaridubhuvi satkritasya Śrī Tiṃgyadeva nṛpatervikritipñiśamya; Gauḍeswarena bhuvi tasya naresvaratve Śrī Vaidyadeva urukirtirayam nijuktah". This simply states that king Tiṃgyadeva who was in charge of the government of the eastern territories, having rebelled during the time of Kumārapāla, son of Rāmapāla, Vaidyadeva was installed in the kingship in his place. There is no mention here either of Kāmarūpa or Prāgjyotiṣa; but there are mentions of 'Pragjyotiṣa-bhukti' and 'Kāmarūpa-manadal' in regard to the location of the land granted (Vaidyadeva's Inscription, lines 48-49, *Gauḍa Lekhamālā*, p. 134): This simply may mean that the land granted was sometimes included in the Prāgjyotiṣa or Kāmarūpa kingdom; and nothing beyond.

**KING KUMARAPALA:** Further still, the donee for generations lived in the village Bhavagrama (now located in Bhavata) about 22 miles to

the west of the present town of Bagra (*Bagurār Itihās*, 2nd ed., p. 112) decidedly on the west of the ancient river Karatoya which usually formed the western boundary of Kāmarūpa proper. So there is no definite proof of Kāmarūpa having been conquered by Ramapāla of Gauḍa who must have been a contemporary of Dharmapāla's father Harṣapāla. *Gauḍa Rājamālā* and *Bāṅgālar Itihās*, by late Rakhaldas Banerji, assigns the latter half of the eleventh century to be the time of Ramapāla. He further writes in his article *Palas of Bengal* (Ch. VI): "Ramapāladeva was succeeded by his second son Kumarapāla about the year 1097 A.D." (*Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. V, No. 3, p. 101). Then Kumārāpāla was a contemporary of Dharmapāla, and as such he could never be in the kingship of any part of Kāmarūpa proper. Again, the Deopāḍa inscription (*Inscriptions of Bengal*, Vol. 111, p. 48, Vol. No. 20) is interpreted by some as Vijayasena's conquest of Kāmarūpa. But the relevant line in verse is "Gaudendramadravadapākṛita Kāmarūpa-bhupaṃ Kalingamapi jastarasā jigāya". Mm. Padmanath opines that the word "Apakṛita" in the above line seems to suggest the then Kāmarūpa king (Dharmapala or any of his successors, may be Jayapāla already mentioned) was expelled by Vijayasena when the former attempted an invasion of the latter's territories (*Kāmarūp Rājāvalī*, p. 42, Footnote 3). Similarly the phrase "Vikramavasikṛita Kāmarūpa", occurring in the Madhainagar inscription (*Inscriptions of Bengal*, Vol. III, p. 111, line 32) is explained as Lakshmansena, the grandson of Vijayasena, conquering Kāmarūpa; but it has no confirmation from any fact or record of Kāmarūpa, epigraphic or otherwise. But the epigraphic records already quoted amply prove that Kāmarūpa king retained their kingdom in tact even till the reign of Jayapāl of the latter half of the twelfth century.

**KAMĀKHYA PITHA:** The famous *Kālikā Purāṇa* (c. 1000 A.D.), suggested by Kanaklal Baruwā to be a compilation even under the patronage of Dharmapāla, assigns that the Kāmākhyā Pitha was at the heart of the kingdom, and by the accounts given in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* the country had a radius of one hundred *yojanas* was Kāmākhyā pitha as its centre. The *Yoginī Tantra* (c. 1400 A.D.) gives even a more detailed description. It says that leaning on the Kāncana mountain of Nepala etc. the country was one hundred *yojanas* in length and thrice ten *yojanas* in breadth, and that it was triangular in its shape. The boundaries of the kingdom have been defined as the Karatoyā on the west and the Dikhow on the east stretching as far as the Dikkaravasini or Dikong the Kunjagiri on the north and the confluence of the Lākshyā or Lakshmi and the Brahmaputra on the south:—

"Tridasa yojana vistṛṇam dīrghena śata yojanam;  
Kāmarūpaṃ vijānihi trikoṇākāramuttamam.

"Nepālasya Kāncanādrīm Brahmaputrasya sangamam  
 "Karatoyām samāsritya jāvaddikaravāsinam;  
 Uttarasyām Kunjagirih Karatoyattu paścime.  
 Tirthaśreshtha Dikshu Nadi purvasyām Girikanyakā  
 Dakshine Brahmaputrasya Lākshyāyah sangamāvadhi  
 Kāmarūpa iti khyātaḥ sarvaśashtreshu niscitah".

Presumably it was the Kāmarūpa Dharma Mandala that was divided into four *pithas*, the westernmost boundaries from the westernmost division of Ratnapitha, being the Karatoya, then of the Kāmapitha being the Sonkoh, then of the Swarnapitha being the Rupika (now Rupahi) in Khagarijān (Nagāo, Asam), and finally of the Saumār pītha, the Bhairabī (now Bharali) in Tezpur, the Dikkara (now Dikrong) in the Lakhimpur subdivision being the easternmost boundary of the easternmost division.

**ĀRIMATTA'S LINE:** One historical tradition, preserved particularly in Wade's *Account* (Pt II, pp 180-81), reveals the story of one king Ārimatta born of the embraces of the Brahmaputra with one damsel of the reign of Rāmcandra, perhaps the seventeenth prince of the line of Jitāri, a Kṣatriya hailing from Drāvir, Southern India, and ruling in Kāmarūpa with his residence on the Rubāyācal mountain. Ārimatta started by killing the king of Bēhar, Durlabhendra *alias* Kamaleswar, and first succeeding to his throne there. Thence he proceeded to Kāmrūp, destroyed its king Rāmcandra and established his throne at Baidyagarh in the present Kāmarūpa district where he constructed a fortress. Thence he shifted his capital, first to Pratapgarh, north of Biswanāth in the present district of Darang, and then to Kāmrūp. He was succeeded by his son Sukrānka who died at Aswākṛānta and who in his turn was succeeded by his son Sutarānka. The latter repaired once more to Pratapgarh and died there leaving his throne to his son Mrigānka, who annexed to his kingdom the entire territory between the Karatoya and Khatadia(?). Four princes of the line of Ārimatta ruled after Mrigānka who had no male issue, terminating in the year 1478 and having commenced in 1238, on the authority of Wades, and paving the way for the rule of the Bārabhuyans.

This *Account* recorded, from the hearsay evidence of common-place, "during a residence of 18 months in Assam" is at variance with current traditions that mention the names of two sons of Ārimatta as Ratna Simha and Jongāl Balahu who ruled in the western and eastern parts, respectively, of their father's kingdom. Embankments and ruined cities etc. support the traditions as regards Jongāl Balahu as well as of Ārimatta at least in the present Nagāo, Darang and Kāmarūpa districts which parts of the old Kāmrūpa kingdom were definitely included in

their territories besides their sway over the countries at least as far as the Karatoya. Kanaklal Baruwā suggests, that king Durlabha and his son and successor Indra (Narayan), about which line we hear no more, may be "Durlabhendra" (in commonplace talk) of Behar whom Ārimatta killed for annexation of that kingdom to his own. And it must have been by the early thirteenth century, for we found Durlabh Narayan ruling in the latter half of the twelfth century, being a cousin of Dharma Pal and having annexed the latter's kingdom to his own. Unlike Gauḍa which originally embraced only Murshidabad together with the southern part of Malda, but later meant other dominions round about, and finally the entire Bengali-speaking area, Kāmarūpa which really meant northern India east of the Kosi or the Karatoya was used to mean its parts also.

**MUHAMMADAN CHRONICLERS:** Between the last epigraphic record of about the middle of the twelfth century and the regular chronicles of the Ahom rulers about the middle of the thirteenth century, there are some records of the Muhammadan chroniclers to throw a little light on the internal condition of Kāmarūpa otherwise in dark. Muhammad Bakhtiyar khilji's invasion of Tibet is described in *Tabaquat-i-Nasiri* (Raverty's translation, Vol. I, p. 560) and in *Riyaz-us-Salatin* (Abdus Salam's translation, pp. 65-68). About 1198 A.D. he overthrew the last Sena king of Bengal, Lakshmaniya, and some years hence started in his expedition to the north. The king of Kāmarūpa was then styled as Kameswar and the Kartoya even then formed the western boundary of the kingdom. The invader was repulsed presently and was saddled with heavy loss of his soldiers; Bakhtiyar himself escaping with a few hundred horsemen. The conquest on the side of Kāmarūpa has been recorded in the Kānāi Baraśī rock inscription near the present town of Gauhati, which reads:—

Śāka 1128. Śāke Turagajugmeśe madhumāsatrāyodashe;

Kāmarūpaṃ samāgatya Turashkah kshayamāyayuh.

This date is equivalent to March, 27, 1206 A. C. approximately.

The *Tabaquat-i-Nasiri* (Raverty, vol. 1, p. 594) mentions that about 1227 A.D. one Governor of Bengal, Ghiyasudin, attempted the second invasion of Kamarupa but returned unsuccessful. This invader is said to have proceeded as far as Sadiya up the Brahmaputra but was then expelled out of the kingdom. The same source (p. 263) reveals that again about 1257 A.D. Ikhtiyaruddin Yuzbak Tughrill Khan launched the third invasion of Kamarupa and was at first successful; but finally met with a sad reverse resulting in the loss of all their lives including that of the Sultan himself. There occurred another, which seems to be



the fourth invasion of Kamarupa in 1337 A.D. by Muhammad Shah who "sent 100,000 horsemen well-equipped to Assam, but the whole army perished in that land of witchcraft and not a trace of it was left. He sent a second army to avenge the former disaster, but when they came to Bengal, they would go no further, and the plan had to be given up." (*The Alamgirnāmāh*, p. 731).

**FALL OF KAMATA:** Niladhvaj, the founder of the khen(khyan) dynasty of Kāmarūpa is often considered to have been the Kāmeswar or king of Kamatā during the first three Muhammadan invasions of Kāmarūpa, with his capital at Kamatāpur on the left bank of the Dharala, and coming to the throne about 1204 A.D. by overthrowing the last Pāla king of Kāmarūpa. This suggests that the Pala kings must have ruled till the end of the twelfth century. Niladhvaj was followed by his son Cakradhwaj who in turn is said to have been succeeded by his son Nilāmbar the last king of the khen dynasty, (*Gait's History*, Rev. Ed., p. 44) Nilambar is said to have come to the throne about 1455 A.D. about 250 years after Niladhvaj, which apparently proves that not two but more than three generations must have passed between kings Niladhvaj and Nilambar. Whatever that may be, Kamatāpur, the capital of Kāmarūpa was put to destruction in 1498 by a double treachery first by Nilambar's minister, Śacīpātra, and then by Hussain Shah, the ruler of Gauda. Niladhvaj is said to have imported many Brahmans from Mithila. Nilambar constructed a grand road from Kamatapura to Ghorāghāt and a part of it even today forms the main road between Kochbehar, Rangpur and Bogra. He was a king of considerable power and ruled the country between the Karatoyā and the Barnadi. According to Muhammadan chronicles, Hussain Shah left his son as a Governor of Kamatā (western Kamarupa) at Hajo, west of the Barnadi. The Malda inscription commemorating this conquest by erecting a Madrassa, is dated about 1501-02 A.D. A later attempt aimed at annexation of the Ahom kingdom resulted in complete annihilation of the Muhammadan army and passing away of Kamatā from off their hands. There is a tradition (*J.A.S.B.*, 1874, p. 216) that Ismail Ghazi conquered Kamatapur about 1460 A.D.; but it is unconfirmed (*Gait's History* p. 45, footnote).

**THE TAI INVADERS:** All this is about the Ratnapīṭha and Kama-pīṭha on the western divisions of the Kamarupa kingdom, west of the Barnadi. We are enlightened about the Suvarna pīṭha and Saumāra pīṭha or the eastern divisions, particularly by the chronicles of a race of foreign invaders who made their appearance in the eastern extremity of the Brahmaputra and having a well-developed historic sense. They were the forefathers of the present Asams or Ahoms, originally belong-



ing to the Tai clan of the Shan' tribe, who had their territories somewhere in the northern and eastern hills of upper Burma, perhaps Maulung, under their leader Sukāphā. His forefathers Khun-lung (-prince-elder) and Khun-lāi (-prince-younger) are said to be the sons of Leng-don (-one-powerful) or Indra, the god of heaven, by whose desire they are said to have descended from heaven by a gold ladder with their following in the year corresponding to 568 A.C. and are said to have alighted in the country of Mun-gri-mun-gram (—country-deserted-country-uninhabited), with no other mission than establishing a kingdom on earth by the elder as king and the younger as his minister.

Sukhāphā, due to a private dispute, is said to have left Maulung, where his predecessors subsequently reigned, about 1215 A.D. with eight nobles, and 9,000 men, women and children, and two elephants and three hundred horses. In 1228 he arrived at the bank of the Khām-nām- jāng after moving about for the thirteen years in the hilly tracts of the Patkai or the extreme north-east Assam range and now and then making raids in the Naga villages. Step by step he proceeded to Nām-rup, Tipām, Hābung and such other places of present upper Asam by atrocities on the Nagas and others who stood in his way, and leaving a noble here and a detachment there to look after the territories he has traversed, till at last he built a city at Carāidew, about twenty miles to the south-east of the present town of Sibsagar, in 1253 A.C. Sukāphā then fought with and defeated the Marāns and the Barāhis then under their kings Badan-cha and Thakumta ruling over the neighbouring territories; but they made friends with them encouraging intermarriage and adopting conciliatory measures. These foreign invaders called this land Mung- dun- sun -kham (-country-full-garden-gold) in their own tongue. Sukapha died in 1268 A.C. leaving his son Suteupha to succeed him.

Now these Tai invaders not only give us connected accounts of the country since, but also throws sufficient light on the internal events of the country in the eastern divisions, namely in the Saumara and Suvarṇa pithas about that time. From those accounts, confirmed here and there by other sources, we learn that in those early days of the thirteenth century, "a line of the Chutiya kings ruled the country east of the Subansiri and the Disāng, with the exception of a strip to the south and south-east where several small Bodo tribes enjoyed a precarious independence. Further west, there was a Kachārī kingdom, on the bank of the Brahmaputra which probably extended half-way across the Nowgong district. . . . west of the Kacharis on the south bank, and of the Chutiyas on the north, were a number of petty chiefs called Bhuyans. The boundaries between the tract ruled by these Bhuyans

and the kingdom of Kamarupa (Kamatā) doubtless varied from time to time; a powerful prince would bring many of them under his control, but they would again become independent when the sceptre passed into the hands of a weaker ruler." (Gait's *History*, p. 38). Thus we come to a period from which the history of the country is better known till recent times. Divisions of Kāmarūpā into Saumāra, Ratna, Kāma and Suvarna Pīṭhas appear to be not of very early origin. The easternmost part of Kāmarūpā was definitely Saumāra Pitha whence its inhabitants might be called Saumārs or Saumas, and the new invaders non-Saumas or Āsaumas or Āhoms; the non-Aryans almost invariably change 's' (X) into h. There are others who would opine that earlier Kāmarupa kings, who most usually claimed their descent from Naraka, son of Viṣṇu and Bhūmi (Earth), hence Bhaumas, labelled these new invaders as non-Bhaumas or Ābhaumas which has been corrupted directly as Āhams. The origin of the words Asam and Āhom has thus driven scholars to exhaust their erudition in divergent directions. One learned article, published in an esteemed research journal and produced by a panel of as many as four Doctors of Philosophy, has, in this connection, gone to the length of equating "mulak" (probably of Arabic origin, meaning a locality) with "muluṅ" (probably of Tāi origin, meaning a simpleton) which a boy of the street in Assam would correct.

## II. THE RACE OF ARYAN AND NON-ARYAN ELEMENTS

**EARLIEST SETTLERS:** Rakhaldas Banerjee is a little at variance with B. S. Guha in certain details about the races particularly in reference to Asam. While regarding the Negrito people as Paleoliths, their earliest representatives being the Āndāmānese, he considers two waves of the Austric invasions sweeping India, those of the second using polished stone weapons with "shoulders", traces of these being found in Burma and Assam and very rarely in Chota Nagpur. In contradiction to Guha, Banerjee opines that the Āngāmi Nāgās belonged to a Mongoloid tribe who invaded Asam in historical times and continued the use of "shouldered stone implements" (*Prehistoric Ancient and Hindu India*, II, 9). He also divides the Austro-Asiatic languages into three groups, the first consisting of speeches of the wild Semang and Sakai living in the Malay Peninsula; the second containing the speeches of Khāsis of Asam, the inhabitants of the Nicobar Islands, and some of the isolated inhabitants of Burma such as the Palaung, the Riang and the Wa; the third including the Munda or the Kolian languages of Central India and the group of tongues called the Mon-khmer which are spoken in Lower Burma and Cambodia. He would connect these people with Neoliths for their polished weapons of stone, for learning to throw missiles and for their discovery of the potter's wheel (pp. 7-8).

In describing the complex culture of the Indus Valley, Banerjee opines that the scanty human remains so far forthcoming indicate the possibility of the representatives of the Mediterranean race, during the late city period, mixing with "round heads" of the Alpine race and perhaps Proto-Mongols" (pp. 9-10). Again "sometime before the Aryan invasion, the Dravidians of Northern India had fused with the Pamirians or the round-headed people who had come through North-eastern Afghanistan and the Indus Valley to Northern India. Evidently these people had not colonized in the Punjab, which had been left to dark-skinned flat-nosed aboriginals." (p. 18). "The Indo-Aryans had enemies of two different classes, the Vṛtras i.e. civilised foes, and Dāsas or Dasyus i.e., enemies of the non-Aryan origin.... In many cases, in later literature reference is to be found to a cultural race called the Asuras. These Asuras are recognized as having been a civilized people, but were looked down upon as they did not worship the deities whom the Indo-Aryans revered" (p. 19).

"The Asuras are generally represented in the epics as a cultured race of demons who possessed considerable skill in building and were formidable enemies even to the gods." "The Dānavas or the Asuras formed a belt around a small Indo-Aryan colony. They were probably the descendants of the Pamirians and the Dravidians, who were certainly far more civilized than the Indo-Aryan invaders. Gradually they were conquered by the new-comers and mixed with them. Thus Vṛtra, the Asura chief, is called a snake in the *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa*; but in the *Mahābhārata* he is regarded as a prince among the Daityas." "These Asuras were great builders and their building operations were regarded with awe and revered by the Aryans. In Vedic literature mention is made of castles of Dāsas built of stone. Cities belonging to the Asuras are called Pātāla, Saubha, Prāgjyotiṣa, Hiranyapura and Takṣaśilā'..... These Asuras are generally regarded as worshippers of the Phallus with obscene rites. The Epic literature refers to the Asura kings as worshippers of Mahadeva in the majority of cases and the prevalence of phallic worship in the south is a clear indication of the fact that before Asuras had adopted the outward form of the worship of the Aryans, they were worshippers of the phallic emblem." (pp. 20-21).

**THE ASURA CIVILIZATION:** "In the extreme north-east, the kings of Prāgjyotiṣa or Assam claim to be descendants from an Asura named Naraka. References in the Vedic literature very clearly indicate that the Indo-Aryans regarding that part of Northern India only to be fit for the occupation of Indo-Aryans where their peculiar manners and customs, and mode of worship had obtained prevalence. The Indo-Aryans had brought with them the cult of worship of fire.... The *Śata-*

*patha Brāhmaṇa* mentions that from the banks of the river Saraswati the sacred fire travelled along the northern bank of the Ganges and crossed the Saraju, Gandak and Kosi rivers and they reached the western bank of the river Sadanira" which last river Banerjee would identify with Tapti; but most probably it means the Karatoyā, the two names being synonymous, further corroborating the latter opinion.

In a learned article in *Indian Culture* (Vol. II, No. 1) Kanaklāl Baruā views the situation from another angle. During the second millennium B. C. the Vedic Aryans entered India through Afghanistan. The physiognomy of this Vedic type in a pure form can be found only in the north west Himalayan tribes like the Kāffirs and Pāthāns and among the Śikhs of the Punjāb and the U. P. Brahmins, and nowhere in Eastern India or the western coast. During the third millenium B.C. an Alpine immigration poured into India, one branch of them moving towards the western coast of India through the Indus Valley, the other branch pushing towards Eastern India, probably without lingering long in their way. At least one Alpine skull has been found at Mohenjodaro confirming their western journey and in Eastern India, as in the western coast, a prominent bracycephal type has been found introduced in the population. In his *Report (Census of India, 1931, Vol. I, Pt. I)* J. H. Hutton calls them Mediterranean; but B. S. Guha opines (*ibid*, Vol. I Pt. II, *Ethnographical*) that these bracycephals and the Vedic Aryans of a much later period must have belonged to a common ancestral stock. Guha finds that the Pods of Bengal, the Telugu Brahmins, the Oriya Brahmins, the Kanarese Brahmins, the Sarasvat Brahmins, the Chippavan Brahmins and the Desastha Brahmins are all basically of this race which "appears to have contributed most to the physical composition of the peoples of India and perhaps to their culture." Though unfortunately the recent anthropometric research in India was not carried into Asam, Hutton thinks that the Kalitas, a prominent high caste of Assam, belong probably to this stock.

**KUMARA AS OF BRAHMAN CASTE:** Yuwān Chwāng observes positively (Beal's *Buddhist Records of the Western World*, Vol. II, p. 195) that Bhāskar Varman is "of the Brahman caste." The Chinese traveller was a very close observer indeed, and his accounts have been found by scholars quite correct and accurate to the minutest details. He also spent more than a month in the capital of Bhaskar Varman. Hence one cannot harbour the least suspicion that Yuwān Chwāng could be mistaken. Varman is also the title of the Guzerati Nagar Brahmins; so then like Nagar Brahmins and like the Telugu, the Oriya, the Kanarese, the Sarasvat, the Chippavan and the Desastha Brahmins, Bhaskar Varman is also a Brahman of the Alpine race. The traditional lite-

rature describes the countries of Eastern India as Anupadesa or Vrātya land, and, as Baruwā opines, the Vrātyas were no other than the Alpines who possessed a fairer complexion, a prominent nose and spoke an Aryan tongue though of the Pisāci variety. The Vrātyas had large prosperous kingdoms in the east such as Magadha, Videha, Kōśala and Prāgiyotiṣa, and were no less cultured than their Nordic conquerors. Again, Asura was the god of the Iranians with whom the Alpines were earlier connected. whence it may be no wonder that the Vrātya kings like Jarāsandha of Magadha, Naraka of Prāgiyotiṣa and Bāṇa of Śoṇitpura were dubbed as Asura. Still more, the kingdom of the Mongolian monarch Ghataka could be conquered by Naraka only by an alliance with Janaka, another Vrātya king of Videha. Last but not least, the towering pillars of the metaphysical theosophy of the Upaniṣads owe their origin probably no less to the Vrātya thinkers, Nordic Brahmans learning them from such Vrātya seers as Janaka, Eastern India producing robust religious thinkers like Buddha and Mahavira besides.

**THE DYNASTY OF BHAGADATTA:** In his learned paper, *"The Place of Assam in the History and Civilisation of India,"* 1955, Suniti Kumar Chatterji, after identifying Asam with the country of Prāgiyotiṣa of old, basing his opinions in this regard mostly on Matichandra's *Geographical and Economic Studies in the Mahābhārata, Upāyana Parva* (U. P. Historical Society, Lucknow, 1945), says: "An inscription in Sanskrit prose in characters going back to the middle of the 7th century A.D. (a form of Proto-Sāradi script) has been found on a rock within the territory of Gilgit (now in Pakistan occupation), which mentions a king of the North-Western Frontier Tract whose titles are given as "Parama Bhattāraka Mahārājādhirāja Parameswara Patola-deva-Sāhi Śri-Nava-Surendrāditya Nandi-deva" who is described as "Sri Bhagadatta-Vaṃśa-Sambhūta".....There is a well-known Hindu Sāhi dynasty ruling in Kabul several centuries later, and names of some other Sāhi kings have also been found very near to the time of this ruler. "Sri Nava-Surendrāditya-Nandi-deva" about whom nothing else is known....He must have been a puissant ruler, and the inscription describes the founding of a town named Makarapura by his faithful vassal Makara Siṃha Sarāṅgha of Gilgitta or Gilgit, and mention has been made in the description of a district called Haṇesara (which may be modern Hunga) and a village called Anhabhūma, not identified.....The presence of a dynasty of kings claiming descent from Bhagadatta, evidently of Assam, is exceedingly intriguing."

In an interesting article *The Common Ancestry of the Pre-Ahom Rulers and some other Problems of the Early History of Assam*, published in the *Indian Historical Quarterly* (September, 1947), Beni

Madhav Barua postulates a new theory. He opines, "It is clear from the inscriptions and *Burañjis* that their composers indulged in menacious fictions when they deliberately intended to invest each ruling dynasty of Assam with a halo of antiquity and heroic origin, availing themselves of certain heroes and their legends in the *Great Epic*. The territorial epithet, *Prāggyotiṣādhīpa*, adorning the name of the pre-Ahom rulers, was definitely borrowed from the *Great Epic* which speaks of *Prāggyotiṣa* as the kingdom and of *Prāggyotiṣapura* as its capital city. *Kāmarūpa* does not find mention in connection with *Naraka* and *Bhagadatta*. The location of *Prāggyotiṣa* and its capital as suggested in the *Great Epic* is absolutely clear, topographically accurate and historically conclusive. The kingdom is placed in the Eastern Punjab in an environment of *Sākaladvīpa*, *Kulindaviṣaya* or *Himavarta* region, and *Trigarta*". (pp. 212-13).

Barua's methods are scientific, arguments logical, and conclusions irresistible, as they are. But he aptly anticipates it to be considered better as an academic discussion rather than any point of personal conviction when he begins by saying "it may serve to remove the inertia of human mind and bestir the sleeping world", (p. 200). He is not unaware of mentions of *Prāggyotiṣa*, often definitely as synonyms of *Kāmarūpa*, although he prefers to interpret otherwise, in the *Raghuvamṣa* (IV, 81-83), *Harsacarita* (VII, p. 184), *Kālikā Purāṇa* (XXXVIII, 119), *Abidhāna Cintāmaṇi* (IV, 22), quoted by himself, besides the *Mahabharata*. Also when he speaks of *Kulinda-viṣaya* being near Punjab-*Prāggyotiṣa*, he has not failed to mention of *Kulinda-nagara* in *Sadiyā* of *Asam Prāggyotiṣa* (p. 213); and when he mentions that *Naraka* and *Muru* (*Mura*) were tribal rather than dynastic, and still less, personal names in the *Great Epic*, he has been fair enough to point out that the two tribal names really survive among the *Murungs* and *Narās* (*Shavelings*) of *Asam* (p. 215). Barua has not denied that the name *Prāggyotiṣa* applied to *Asam* occurs from the earliest epigraphic records besides strong traditions about *Naraka* and *Bhagadatta* which may be equally prevalent in Western India as it is in this Eastern India. So the only conclusion that may be safe, and not hazarded, is that as shown earlier, the same Alpine people pushed to the eastern and western India carrying these common territorial and personal names traditionally.

THE KALITAS: *Yuān Chwāng* states (*Records*, II, 195) that there had elapsed a thousand generations from the time that *Bhāskar's* family seized the land, which means about thirty thousand years. If we take only three thousand years out of it, we come to about the middle of the third millenium B.C. This exactly coincides with the time of Alpine

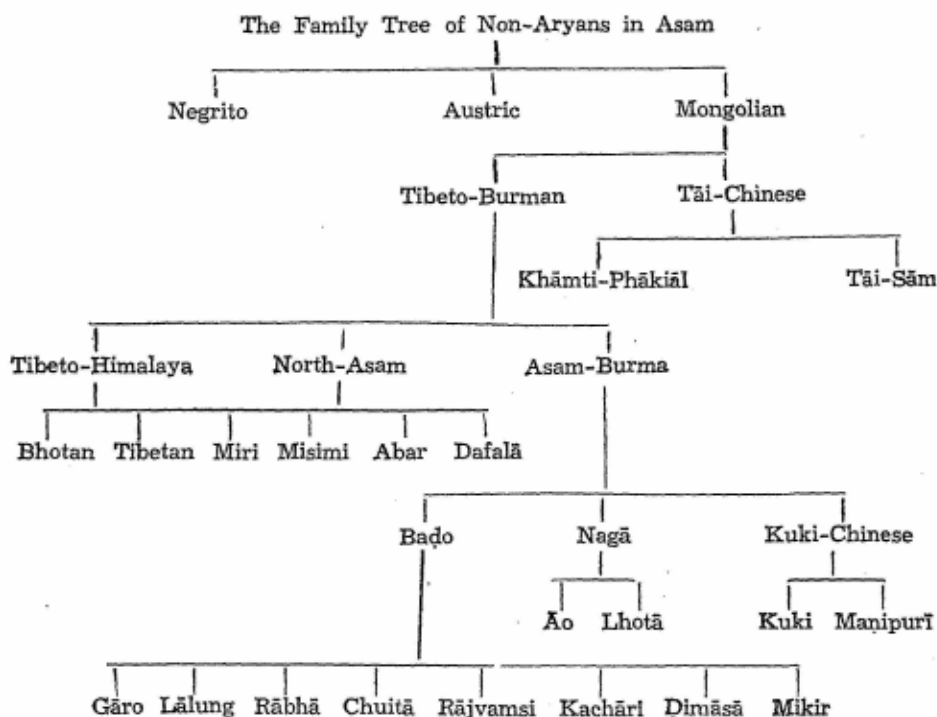
immigration into India in two streams, one to Eastern India and the other to the western coast. It is then for this fact that Asam-Prāgjyotiṣa is admitted on all hands to be the one, and probably the only one, Aryan colony in the East in pre-Indo-Aryan times of India (Dines Sen's *History of Bengali Language and Literature*, p. 1; Bankim Chatterji's *Pravandha Pustak*, Pt. II; Bhadra's *History of North India*; *Srihatter Itivṛtta*, Pt. II etc. etc.). Scholars are also unanimous and eloquent on the point that Kalita's were the earliest Aryan settlers of Asam-Prāgjyotiṣa (Dalton's *Ethnology*; Gait's *History of Assam*, etc.). Hence Barua's conclusion appears really irresistible that "the Kings of the Naraka line were probably Aryan Kalitas" (*Early History of Kamarupa*, p. 25). Alexander Cunningham contended (*Ancient Geography*, pp. 572-73) that modern Gauhati could not be identified with ancient Prāgjyotiṣapura, the capital of the Varman kings from the time of Naraka; for Yuān Chwāng came from Pundra Vardhana and "going east 900 li or so (about 150 miles) crossing the great river Kalotu (Karatoya) came to the country of Kia-ma-lu-pa (Kāmarūpa)". Cunningham identified Pundra Vardhana with Pābna, and said that Gauhāti was not 900 li but was about 1900 li from Pabna. Happily, the Government of India publication named *India in 1931-32* among other things observes: "The most important find of the year in the field of epigraphy was a small fragment of stone bearing an incomplete inscription of six lines in the Brāhmī script of the third century B.C. which was dug up by a labourer among the extensive ruins of Mahasthangarh in the Bogra district. .... The new inscription is the earliest antiquity found at Mahasthangarh (identified with Pundara Vardhana) the ancient capital of North Bengal or Varendra Desa". Gauhati is of course about 150 miles from Mahasthangarh.

THE VEDIC ARYAN CIVILISATION IN ASSAM: About Vedic Aryanisation of Assam mention has already been made of the sacred fire crossing the Kośī river and reaching the western bank of Sadānīrā (Karatoyā) even in the days of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. The Nidhanpur inscription proves further that as early as fifth century there were already a fairly good number of Brahmans and Kāyasthas in Asam. "It is so remarkable that while in the neighbouring province of Gauḍa (Bengal) the alleged import of Ādisura of five Brahmans from Kanauj, or the mythical creation of *Saptasthi* (700) Brahmans is not attributed to a period earlier than the 8th century A.D., there should be so many Brahmans found in a single village in Kāmarūpa two centuries earlier". (*Epigraphiā Indicā*, Vol. XIX, pp. 115-25). Such was the pleasant surprise of Padmanāth Bhattacharya, the great editor of *Kamrup Sāsanaṅvali*, and the statement itself is a challenge to those who fancy



Vedic Aryanisation of Asam to have occurred only about the fifteenth century A.D.

One may call this State literally Asam or peerless from any point of view one prefers. Plains or hills, the latter occupying about three-fourths of the land, are both extremely rich in all resources including beauties of nature and a beautiful mild climate. It is a proverbially polygot State of India; while of the nine millions of its total population only five millions have their mother-tongue, Asamiyā, there are as many as 120 different mother-tongues spoken by the rest of the population, there being about 20 separate mother-tongues among the Nagas themselves, so that it would be an anarchy like the Tower of Babel if there would be nothing like a *lingua franca* found by all in Asamiyā. As in language so in creed, culture and race, Asam is rightly compared to a Museum of Nature, embracing all possible varieties and types, ranging from Negrito to the Nordics and including particularly the brachycephals playing so great a role in the theatre of the highly complex and advanced, but unrecognised, culture of Asam.



The family-tree is only tentative; the Naga group, for example, consisting of about 20 members, cannot be shown here. Out-pour of



all the hordes of Mongolian tribes into Asam need not be taken as all pre-Aryan; that they are dubbed as Mlecchas or foreigners may prove it to be pro-Aryan fact. Scholars seem unanimous in identifying Baḍo people with Kirātas described in the *Mahābharata*, and that they formed the bulk of the population of Asam-Prāgjyotiṣa about the second millenium B.C. does not admit of any doubt. Names of most of the tributaries of the Brahmaputra, as Dikam, Dihing, Disāng, Dibang etc., are of Baḍo origin where "Di" means 'water'. Sunitikumar Chatterji is inclined to think, the names of two other tributaries of the Brahmaputra, Dhan-siri (silver-producing river) and Suvaṇ-siri (gold producing river) are also of Baḍo origin; for "siri" in Baḍo language means "river". May be that this Baḍo group of the Tibeto-Burman sub-family had also considerable contribution to creed and culture of Assam.

The fact that not highly exceeding a million of people of reputed Aryan descent are shown in the census returns of Asam may not blind us to the truth of Aryan predominance in the State. A short critical account of a foreign chronicler, Sahabuddin, who stayed for sometime in the state in 1662 during Mir Jumla's invasion records: "The original inhabitants of the country are of two races—the Assamese (? Ahoms) and the Kalitās. In all things the later are superior to the former; but in performing difficult tasks and making a firm stand in the battle, the opposite is the case". (Translation by Jadunāth Sarkar, *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, Vol. I, p. 179, quoted by Gait). The facts of the Kalitās being Aryans by heredity and culture, and their influence in sufficiently Aryanising the rest of the population (by Census, 1931, about 80% being Aryan speakers), they themselves being the earliest Aryan settlers in this earliest Aryan colony of Eastern India admit little doubt.

That this Aryan settlement in Prāgjyotiṣa must have taken place long before the Mahabharata war, is proved from various sources some of which are to be repeated. From the Rāmayaṇa we have that Prāgjyotiṣa was founded by Amūrtarājas, a son of the great king Kuśa "who was apparently an Aryan in Madhyadesa" (Pargiter's Ancient countries in Eastern India). Not only does Naraka's son, Bhagadatta, refer to himself as a friend of Indra, the god of heaven (Sabhā Parva ch. XXVI, Vol. 12-13). Also the Droṇa Parva (ch. XXVIII, V. 51) mentions of him as a friend of Indra. Also in the Mahābhārata it is stated that Bhagadatta was an 'aged friend' of Pandu, and he came completely under the Aryan influence from which it is natural to think that Aryans were settled in his kingdom. True it is that in the Adi Parva (ch. LXVII, V. 9) and also in the Drona Parva (ch. XXVIII, vs. 37-38) Bhagadatta is as well referred to as an Asura. This was

evidently spoken by Krishna to incite Arjuna to kill Bhagadatta, who was the friend of his father, Indra.

**NARAKA'S ARYAN DESCENT:** Further it is narrated in the *Kālikā Purāna* (ch. XXVI-XL) that king Naraka who was brought up in the family of Janaka, the king of north Behar or Videha and married Māyā, the princess of Vidarbha, killed the Kirāta king, Ghataka, to conquer Pragjyotisha and settled Aryans in his kingdom. Not to speak of such references in the Epics and Puranas, even the inscription of Bhaskaravarman mentions that about the 5th century A.D. there were Brahmans and Kayasthas in Kamarupa. Mahamahopadhyaya Padmanath Bhattacharyya Vidyavinode, the reputed editor of *Kāmrūp Śāsanāvali*, observes—"It is so remarkable that while in the neighbouring province of Gauda (Bengal) the alleged import of Adisura of five Brahmans from Kanauj or the mythical creation of Saptasthi (700) Brahmans is not attributed to a period earlier than the 8th century A.D., there should be so many Brahmans found in a single village in Kamarupa two centuries earlier". (*Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XIX, pp. 115-125).

The records of Hiuen Tsiang who visited the country in the early half of the 7th century A.C. throw much light on this point too. He mentions: "The country of Kamarupa is about 10,000 li (nearly 1700 miles) in circuit. The capital is about 30 li. The land lies low but is rich and regularly cultivated. They cultivate the jack fruit and the cocoanut.... The climate is soft and temperate. The manners of the people are simple and honest.... Their language differs a little from that of mid-India.... their memories are retentive and they are earnest in study. They adore and sacrifice to the Devas and have no faith in Buddha; Hence from the time Buddha appeared in the world, even down to the present day, there never as yet has been built one Sanghārāma as a place for the priests to assemble. Such disciples as there are of a pure faith, say their prayers secretly and that is all. There are abundant Deva temples, and different sectaries to the number of several myriads.

"The present king belongs to the old line of Narayan Dev. He is of the Brahman caste. His name is Bhaskar Varman, his title Kumar. From the time that this family seized the land and assumed the Government, there have elapsed a thousand generations. The king is fond of learning and the people are so likewise in imitation of him. Men of high talent from distant regions, seeking after office, visit his dominions. Though he has no faith in Buddha, yet he much respects Sramanas of learning.

"On the east this country is bounded by a line of hills.... The frontiers are contiguous to the barbarians of the southwest of China....

On the southeast of this country herds of elephants roam about in large numbers, therefore in this district they use them principally for war. Going 1,200 or 1,300 li to the south (about 200 miles) we come to Samatata (East Bengal)." (Beal's *Buddhist Records of the Western World*, Vol. II, p. 195).

Thus the point of this country being long Aryanised seems beyond dispute. Hiuen Tsiang's description of Bhāskar being personated as Brahmā while Siladitya Harsa personated himself as Śakra (Indra) in their procession along the Ganges, already mentioned seems to corroborate this view. This is further confirmed by the fact of another king of this line being treated with great respect by Aja, in the *Raghuvamśa* (ch. VII, V. 17) by Kalidasa.

**NON-ARYAN KINGS OF PRAGJOYTISA:** True it is that the earliest known kings of Pragjyotiṣa, starting with Mahiranga who was succeeded in turn by Hatak, Sambar and Ratna, were all styled as Asur, an appellation undoubtedly suggesting their non-Vedic Aryan origin or character. They were followed by Ghataka, the ruler of the Kiratas who are classed by Manu with Mlechchhas. 'Kirata' is said in the chronicles of the Tippera rulers, to have been the ancient name of their country, the word still surviving in that sense to the sub-Himalayan territories between the Dud Kosi and Arun rivers. Siva who adopted the form of a Kirata to fight a duel with Arjuna is their deity, whence his wives Umā and Gangā, born of the Himalaya, have the nickname Kirati. (Gait's *H.A.*, p. 12, footnote).

Ghataka was overthrown by Naraka who was also called Asura but whose life story does not suggest a non-Aryan origin. According to the *Kālikā Purāṇa* (ch. XXXVIII), the great Rajarshi (royal ascetic) Janaka, king of Videha (north Behar), being childless, made a great *jajna* (sacrifice) as a result of which he obtained one daughter and one son in the very sacrificial ground, born of Earth. The daughter was of course Sita and the son Naraka; the latter being so named by the royal priest Gautama for Janaka found this newborn male child in his sacrificial ground placing his head on a human skull (Nara-man: ka-head), *Kālikā Purāṇa*, ch. XXXVIII, V. 2). And Naraka, like Sita, was brought up in the royal family of Videha till he was sixteen, when he came to Prāgjyotiṣa and established himself there. It is a fact beyond dispute that Videha was one of the earliest celebrated colonies of the Aryans who settled here directly after they left the banks of the Saraswatī, at least by the time the Brāhmans, and that Janaka and Sītā were of course true Aryan. So what for his divine lineage from Visnu (as Varāha) and what for his being brought up as a son by Rajarshi Janaka we have no reason to call him a non-Aryan,

**THE EARLIEST ARYAN KINGDOM:** The life story of Naraka is described in the Bhagawat (Bk. X. ch. LIX) and Yoginī Tantra (First half, Ch. XII), besides the *Kālikā Purāṇa* (Ch. XXXVI to XL). The *Yoginī Tantra* further mentions the names of other kings of Kāmarūpa such as Deveswar ruling at the beginning of the Saka era, of Naga San- kar or Nagakhya ruling at Pratapgarh in Viswanath about the end of the fourth century A.D. and others, about whom our knowledge is scanty, but there seems little doubt that the kings of the line of Naraka who practically ruled till the twelfth century were all Aryanised.

The first Aryan colonies seem the tract between the Saraswati and the Indus, and then that between the former and the Drishadvati, then called Brahmāvarta. Finally the whole country bounded by the Hima- layas and the Vindhya respectively on north and south, and by the Eastern and Western seas, became occupied by the Aryans whence it assumed the name Aryavartta (*Manu Samhitā*).

Āsamudratu bai Purāvadāsamudrattu paschimāt;  
Tayorevāntaram girjorajyavartam vidurvudhāh.

The countries to the immediate west of Pragjyotisha remained long as non-Aryan countries and special penance was prescribed for those who would visit these on any purpose other than pilgrimage. Manu Samhita's injunction is too well known:

Aanga Vanga Kalingeshu Saurāśtreshu Magadeshu;  
Tirtha jātrām vinā gachchhan punah samskāramarhati.

Whatever this may be, these were of course all non-Aryan coun- tries for long. Scholars are generally of opinion that Pragjyotisha the land of early light, was, as the name suggests, occupied by the Aryans long before these countries of the environment. "The pre-his- toric kingdom of Pragjyotish which extended from modern Jalpaiguri to the backwoods of Assam, was one of the earliest Aryan colonies in the country." (*History of Bengali language and literature*, p. 1). Bankim Chandra Chatterji opines: "In very remote times, there was an Aryan kingdom where Kamarupa is located. Probably in ancient times this kingdom alone shed the lustre of the Aryan-speaking race among all the non-Aryan countries, whence it owes its name (*Pravandha Pustak*, part II, *Bāṅgālār Itihāser Bhagangśa*). Bhadra writes to the same effect: "The eastern part became an Aryan colony in the time of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*." (*History of North India*). The learned author of *Śrī-Hatter Itivritta* (Pt. II) also shows how the neighbouring countries like Pundravardhana remained non- Aryan countries when Amūrta Rāja established the Aryan kingdom of Prāgjyotiṣa. There is also a tradition that there was once a Kalita

country on the other side of the mountain range to the north-east of Assam. In the *Mudrarakshasam* we find mention of the Kulutas as inhabitants of the Kuluta country who under their king Chitravarman helped Malaya Ketu against Chandragupta Maurya. They are regarded as belonging to Eastern India. These Kulutas or Kalitas also live in parts of Orissa. "The Kalitas once had great sway in Rungpur; and many of those remaining have assumed the title of Kaists:" according to Dalton.

Later Muhammadan writers such as the authors of *Ain-i-Akbari* and the *Riyaz* in giving an account of the early kings of Bengal begin with Bhagadatta, for then the whole of modern northern Bengal, and possibly central Bengal also, was within his kingdom and his dynasty ruled Bengal for nearly 2200 years after which it passed to Noz Gouria, a Kayastha king (Dalton's *Ethnology*, p. 7) whose descendants ruled for 250 years till Ādisura became the ruler.

Thus in the kingdom of Prāgyjyotiṣa stretching as far west as Mithila (Videha or north Behar) and as far south as the Ganges or the then sea, Aryanisation must have begun in pre-Mahabharata times and of course long long before central or lower Bengal; and the successors of Bhagadatta held the old territories for a long time until perhaps the rise of the Mauryas and thereafter the Guptas. "Besides it may be supposed that as the earliest Aryan colonists in Assam were the Kalitās; the kings of Naraka line were probably Aryan Kalitas". (*Early History of Kāmarūpa*, ch. I, p. 25).

**PRE-VEDIC ARYAN SETTLEMENT:** Besides the point of language the early Vedic Aryan settlement in Pragyjyotiṣa seems forced on us by yet other facts. The Assamese Vihu (Viṣuva) festivals occurring about the two equinoxes and the two solstices (though the one of the summer solstice has since become out of use) must have had some connexion with the Atirātira, Mahavrata and the Vishuvaha sacrifices of the Aiteriya Brahmana (IV, 4.18) and seem as old. The Assamese social customs regarding prevalence of widow re-marriage etc; dress as 'mekhala' (Vedic mekhela) and 'reha' (remnant of the holy thread of women and worn in the same manner); ornaments such as 'maṇi', 'khāru', (vedic khādi), Kariyā (vedic kurira); khopā (vedic Kaparda) or lock hair, worn by men and women alike; pots as 'Caru' and pans as 'thāli' (vedic 'sthalī') professions, particularly weaving, and jewellery such as 'mīnā' are given as proofs of early Vedic Aryan settlement in Prāgyjyotiṣa (*Assamese Grammar and Origin of the Assamese Language*, Introduction II, pp. xxxix-xlvii).

The *Census Reports* of the *District Gazetteers*, and Dalton's *Ethnology* speak in unequivocal and eloquent terms about the priesthood of the Kalitas till comparatively very recent times.

Rapson's *Ancient India*. (pp. 26-28) appears to emphatically confirm the theory of immigration of non-Vedic Aryans through north-east or

Tibet when he observes: "The invaders from the east, greatly as they have modified the ethnology and the languages of India, have left no enduring record whether in the advancement of civilization or in literature. Invaders from the west, on the other hand, have determined the character of the whole continent". E. C. Mobbs observes that in the Tons valley and Jaumsaer Baswer there are two classes of people viz. Rajputs or Brahmans and the Kalitas; and that among both the classes marriage which is performed with or without the help of a priest, takes place after the bride has attained puberty, widow marriage too being common. (*Indian Forester*, vol. LX; *Life in a Himalayan Valley*, pp. 663-799).

Sir Edward Gait often refers to the Kalitās as an Aryan race and speaks of the northeast route of Assam though as the route of the Mongolians: "Assam is in many ways a country of exceptional interest. Hemmed in, as India is, by the sea on the south-east and south-west, and by the lofty chain of the Himalayas on the north the only route between it and the rest of Asia which are practicable for migration on a large scale lie on its north-west and north-east confines. The so-called Aryans and many later invaders, such as the Greeks, the Huns the Pathans, and the Mughals, entered India from the north-west, while from the north-east, through Assam, have come successive hordes of immigrants from the great hive of the Mongolian race in Western China". (Introduction to first Edition, H. A., p. vii).

### III. THE TONGUE, SANSKRIT AND PRĀKRIT AND THE SCRIPT

A MAJOR LANGUAGE: Asamiya is one of the fourteen major languages of India; with Bengali, Oriyā and Maithili it forms the easternmost group of modern Indian languages considered as coming through Māgadhi Apabhraṃsa and belonging originally to the Indic sub-division of the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European family of languages. As an independent speech it must be in existence at least from the time of the Varman Kings of Asam, the earliest of them being known to be Puṣya Varman, a contemporary of Samudra Gupta, the great Emperor of India. At any rate its independent existence must be prior to Yuān Chwāng's visit of this land, then called Kāmarūpa, as he made particular observation of this speech: "The country of Kiamolupa is about 10,000 li (nearly 1700 miles) in circuit. The capital is 30 li. The land lies low but is rich and regularly cultivated.... The climate is soft and temperate. The manners of the people are simple and honest.... Their language differs a little from that of Mid-India .... Their memories are retentive and they are earnest in study". (*Records*, II, p. 195). This proves that Asamiyā as a characterised and distinct language was already recognised. The great Chinese traveller made this statement after his long and extensive tour in Mid-India, and he came presently from Bengal to stay for about a month in the capital of Asam. Bengali scholars find it "curious"

that Yuān Chwāng made no mention of any language of Pundra Vardhana or Karna Suvarṇa in Bengal; but history and epigraphy give joint evidence that a large portion of Bengal, as Karna Suvarṇa, were already included in the kingdom of Kāmarupa under the then reigning king, Bhaskar Varman, whose invitation Yuān Chwāng had accepted. Linguistic evidence perhaps joins them to show that no language of Bengal was specially mentioned by Yuan Chwāng for the simple reason that it was then one with that of Kāmarupa or Asam, and no sprout of a separate Bengali speech was yet forthcoming.

Bengali scholars had also been erring in laying undue emphasis on the geographical rather than the historical situations and in considering Asam as an extension of Bengal in such matters as Aryanisation of the people and their speech. So they made the sad mistake of supposing that Asamiyā was borrowed from Bengali when rather the contrary could be claimed with better reasons; and it is Grierson who first pointed out the mistake: "North Bengal (an integral part of the Kamarupa kingdom) and Asam did not get their language from Bengal proper but directly from the west. Māgadhi Apabhraṃsa, in fact, may be considered as spreading out eastwards and southwards in three directions. In the north-east it developed into (present) Northern Bengali and Assamese (one in two), to the south into Oriyā, and between the two into Bengali. Each of these three descendants is equally and directly connected with the common immediate parent, and hence we find (present) North Bengali agreeing in some respects rather with Oriyā, spoken far away to the south, than with Bengali of Bengal proper of which it is usually classed as a sub-dialect". (*Linguistic Survey of India*, Vol. I, Pt. I, p. 126).

Sunitikumar Chatterji writes: "The primitive Indo-Europeans, of whom the Aryans (of India) were a branch, developed their language and culture in the Eurasian tracts south of the Ural mountains C. 300 B.C. and one band of them came to the northern Mesopotamian regions C. 2500 B.C. from where they passed on to India *via* Iran. It is believed that the Indo-Europeans proper, and the short-headed Alpines; .... Aryan speech came in various waves from the west". (*Languages and Linguistic Problems*, Oxford pamphlet series, No. 11, p. 9). Kanaklal Baruwa opines that this Aryan speech, imported by the Alpines long before the Vedic Aryan entered, was Pisachi, "a language of the Dardic type, a descendant of which is still to be found in Khowari, the speech of the Khus of Chitral who are definitely Alpine in physical characteristics and who evidently mark the route taken by the Alpines for their entry into India through the Pāmirs, Kashmiri



and Kohisthani are also languages of this stock like all other languages of the band". (*Indian Culture*, Vol. II, No. 1).

Baruwa provides ample illustrations from Asamiyā vocabulary and pronunciations, as of X in particular, to show that like other members of the Pisachi languages, Asamiyā is often more allied with the original Indo-European languages than with Sanskrit. So he contends: "Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji has thus been led to trace the origin of the Bengali language to Vedic Sanskrit through Māgadhi Prakrit, rejecting Dr. Grierson's classification of the Indo-Aryan languages into inner and outer bands and the entire evidence adduced by the anthropologists based not only on cephalic indices but also on other somatic characters and blood groups. Having rejected these scientific data he has been forced to postulate two sets of Aryans entering India, Vedic and non-Vedic, the latter preceding the former and occupying Eastern India before the advent of the Vedic Aryans by whom they were designated as Vrātyas. It is hardly necessary to add that this theory, which is only an adaptation of Dr. Hoernle's speculation of a second Aryan intrusion through the Himalayas is now discredited. Rai Bahadur Ramaprasad Chanda's theory of a tribe of the Homo-Alpines entering India and pushing towards the east giving rise to the Pisachi languages of Eastern India and non-Mongoloid brachycephaly particularly in Bengal, has now been accepted by all competent scholars who have correctly postulated an earlier date for this invasion." (*Alpines in Eastern India*).

**RISE OF ASAMIYĀ :** Days of Bhāskar Varman, hence of Harṣa Var-dhana, were really the days of rise of modern regional languages of India. "These were the times when people living in various provinces had started thinking in terms of their own regions. One proof whereof is the growth of literature in the provincial languages in this period. Thus the history of Bengali literature is traced to the time of Śāśānka (See *Sahitya Pragati* by B. N. Dutta, p. 17). Similarly, the scholars of Hindi trace the origin of their literature to the seventh century." (*Short Note on Harṣa*, *The Journal of the Ganganath Jha Research Institute*, V. X, pts. I-IV, 1954). Scholars had so long been groping in the dark for the forms of exact Prakṛta from which Asamiyā had evolved. Benī Madhav Barua, in his article "*Miscellany: The Scribe-Engravers of Indrapāla's second Copper-Plate and Prakrit of Pre-Ahom Times*" has brought out a good deal of very important details in this regard by a pains-taking and erudite study of the early copper plates of Asam: "Confronting the Garuda in the second space (12) are inscribed two letters *s'a-ni*, and below them in a vertical table two letters *dha-ni* and two others *ani*. . . . Just below the three symbols of the lotus, the conch-shell and the wheel figuring in a row there is the continuation of the subscript matter in a row of eight letters to be read *pusta-siri-aṣṭa-henta*. . . . Pandit Padmanath suggests that here we have three personal names, the first *Śāni*, being the name of the composer of the metrical text of the inscription, and the remaining two, *Dhani* and *Ani*, those



of the scribe-engravers . . . . Here *siri* for *śri* is a clear instance of Prakritism. In Pali too, we have invariably *siri* for *śri*. The *hanta* after *aṣṭa* is a suffix or surname peculiar to Assamese. [If the intended word is *hanta* (=hañt) it is a plural suffix (the same as *vōr*) used in a sense of humility.]

"The Pre-Ahom inscriptions of Kāmarūpa contain a few other instances of Prakritism that may be taken to indicate the nature and form of the dialect as current in those times, say from the 6th to 12th century A.D., I mean the Prakrit language in the historical background of Assamese. The archaic forms crept in these records and held their rightful place through the inadvertence on the part of the local composers, or that of the local scribe-engraver, or that of both, in spite of the conscious attempt made for producing the legal documents,—the land grants, in authentic Sanskrit—[Abbreviations. BhN = The Nidhanpur copper-plate of Bhāskar Varman; H, B, R, = The copper-plates of Harjarvarman, Balavarman, Ratnapala (respectively); I, I 2 = Indrapala's first and second copper plates respectively; Dh1, Dh2, DhKho = Dharmapala's first, second and Khanamukh copper plates respectively].

"The causative substantives *Sāsaitā* ("the composer of the land-grant"), *lekhavitā* (the scribe) and *prāpavitā* ("the recipient") all occurring in BhN are unusual in Sanskrit, although their coinage may be grammatically justified. *Puṣkirini* for *puṣkarīṇi* (BhN, B, I, Dh2) must have been a local spelling, and not an accidental feature. *Balavanto* in H, for *balavān*, Pali *balavā*, is a form which is very common in Assamese, cf. Pali *mahanto*, Bengali *S'rīmanta*, Assamese and Chittagong dialect *S'rimanta*, *qunavanta*, *buddhimanta*, *lakkhimanta* (cf. Pali *The-rāgāthā*, verse 1050; *qatimanto satimanto* . . . *ca yo isi*). *Dumbari* for *Sk. udumbara*, Bengali *dumur* (a fig tree) too is a local word. *Pārālī*, *pārula* (a kind of tree) too is a local form. *Koppā* (B), *Diddesā* and *sevā* as names of two *vāpis* (B), *Paṇḍari* as the name of another plot (I<sub>2</sub>), *jola* (I<sub>o</sub>) meaning a small canal, same as *ḥor* in Chittagong dialect, *Jhari pākati* as the name of a tree (Dh1), *Bhalla'bhithi* as the name of a plot of land (Dh1), *Dijinnā* as the name of a stream (Dh1), *Akhota* as the name of a tree (Dh1), *Odi-amma* as a kind of tree (Dh1) *Oleṇḍā* and *Kaṇḥjoyabhitiva* as two plots of land (Dh1), *Orangitantrā* as a class or section of weavers (Dh1), *Kanta'vakkada* as the name of a tree (Dh1), *Diḡdola* as the name of an old village (Dh2), *Sovvāḍi* as the name of a tank (Dh2), *Hāruppeśvara* as a place name (B), and the like are all local names. *Sekyakāra* (BhN), Bengali *Sekrā* ("a smith") seems to have been just a Sanskritised form of a local word . . . . .

"Turning at the last to the words "corrected" by Pandit Padmanath we can easily make out the following distinctive features of Prakritism of the age. (1) Shortening of long vowels: *Vajasaneyī* (BhN) for *Vājasaneyī*; *Savitra* (BhN) for *Sāvitra*; *Caturbhaga* (BhN) for *Caturbhāgah*; *Pattābhavat* (BhN) for *Pattābhavat*; *Taittirīya* (BhN) for *Taittirīya*; *Gayatripāla* (BhN) for *Gāyatripāla*; *Dhṛti svāmi* (BhN) for *Dhṛtisvāmī*; *mayura* (BhN) for *mayūra*; *sunu* (BhN) for *sūnu*; *Kosiko* (BhN) for *Kausikah*; *Dhotesvara* (BhN) for *Dhautesvara*. (2) Shortening of long vowels before conjoint consonants and anusvāra:

*Chandogya* (BhN) for *Chāndogya*; *Śaniścara* (BhN) for *Śanaīścara*; *Bhaggavo* (BhN) for *Bhārgavaḥ*; *Jahveśvara* (BhN) for *Jahvīśvara*; *bhutvā* (BhN) for *bhūtīvā*; *murite* (BhN) for *mūrtite*; *īśvara* (BhN) for *īśvara*; *ardhaṃsa* (BhN) for *arddhāṃśa*.

“(3) Substitution of one vowel for another: *kalpatā*, *vahatā*, *racatā* (BhN) for *kalpitā*, *vihita*, *racita*; *Vajasunaye* (BhN) for *Vājasaneyī*; *Taittiriya* (BhN) for *Taittirīya*; *jagaduduya* (BhN) for *jagadudaya* cf. *udupāna* (Asoka's R.E.I.) for *udapāna*; *daive* (BhN) for *deve*. *Ṛi* represented by *a*: *vaha* (BhN) for *vṛiha*.

“(4) Absence of Sandhi: *Hari-adbhūta* (BhN) for *Haryadbhūta*; *tebhyo akṣarāṇi* (BhN) for *tebhyo 'kṣarāṇi* cf. *vasa-abhisitena* (Asoka's PE), *guṇa-upetena* (khāravēla's), *Hathigumpha* inscription). *Yi* represented by *i*: *Śāsaitā* (BhN) for *Śāsayitā*; *dolāitam* (B) for *dolāyitam*.

“(5) Dispensing with *y* in consonantal combinations: *mātsanyāya* (BhN) for *mātsyanyāya*; *Lakṣmā* (I<sub>2</sub>) for *Lakṣmyā*; *Kāśapo* (BhN) for *Kāśyapah*. Dropping of *t* or *ṭ* in a consonantal sandhi in which it is followed by another consonant: *ujvalam* (BhN) for *ujjvalam*; *sampatyupāta* (BhN) for *sampattyupāta*; *satva* (BhN) for *sattva*; *bhavatasya* (BhN) for *bhavattasya*; *kuṭimam* (I<sub>2</sub>) for *kuṭṭimam*. Doubling of *t* in *sthitti* (BhN) for *sthiti*. (6) Euphonic advent of consonants in the middle of words: *Kamalavāsini iva*, *divākara-m-iva* (H) Cf. *Pali Kasā-m-iva*, *Lakṣmi-s-samā* (BhN) for *Lakṣmi-samā*, *ām-v-ra* (B) for *āmra*.

“(7) Dropping of the initial vowel of the second word in a Sandhi: *payantiva* (H) for *payantyevam*; *m* followed by *sa* or *ha* changes into *n*: *puṇsām*, *yaśāṇsi* (BhN) for *pumsām*, *yaśāṇsi*; *siṅhāsana* (H) for *siṃhāsana*; *aṇsa* (BhN) for *aṃsa*; *mīmāṇsā* (Dhkh) for *mimāṃsā*. *m* followed by *sa* changes into *n*: *vansa* (I<sub>2</sub>) for *vaṃsa*; *mimansā* (Dh<sub>2</sub>) for *mimāṃsā*, a phenomenon noticed in later inscriptions only. (8) Change of *m* into *n* at the end of a word: *amalan*, *yauvanan* (B) for *amalam*, *yauvanam*.

“(9) Dropping of *m* in a feminine genitive suffix: *Dattadevyā*, *Ratnavatyā* (BhN) for *Dattadevyām*, *Ratnavatyām* cf. *Pali deviyā*. Tendency to change *ah* into *o* as in *Pali*: *nāgebhyo* (BhN) for *nāgebhyah*; *Chāndogo* (BhN) for *Chāndogah*. (10) Substitution of one consonant for another: *abhikāmika* (BhN) for *abhigāmika*; *yāyeta* (R) for *jāyeta*; *Bhaṭṭinanta* (BhN) for *Bhaṭṭinanda*; *Ananda* (BhN) for *Ananta*. (11) Assimilation of *rya* into *jja*: *vījja* (I<sub>1</sub>) for *virjya*; of *tsa* into *ccha*: *vacchare* (Dhkh) for *vatsare* (I<sub>2</sub>) Dropping of *n* followed by *n*: *asmineva* (I<sub>1</sub>) for *asminneva*; *tasmānaitā'ni* (BhN) for *tasmānnaitāni*.

“(13) Random substitution of one sibilant for another as in the Asokam dialect of Kalsi, Mansehra and Shahbazgarhi: *darṣita* (BhN) for *darśita*; *śakala* (I<sub>1</sub>) for *sakala*; *jyotiṣā* for *jyotiṣā*; *duskara* (I<sub>1</sub>) for *duṣkara*; *tosita* (I<sub>2</sub>) for *toṣita*; *vansa* (I<sub>1</sub>) for *vaṃsa*; *Satakratu* (Dh<sub>1</sub>) for *Śatakratu*; *sasāsa*, *saśvat* (Dh<sub>1</sub>) for *saśāsa*, *śāśvat*;

*addhaśotah* (Dh<sub>2</sub>) for *arddhasrotah*; *aślāyāṇa* (BhN) for *aslayāyāṇa*, (14) The dropping of *visarga* in a sandhi : *Yasābhūti* (BhN) for *yaśo'bhūti*. Instances of *Samprasāraṇa* : *siri* (I<sub>2</sub>) for *Śri*; *Bāhavṛca* (BhN) for *Bāhvṛcyā*. (15) Tendency to do away with *ref* in all cases of assimilation as in Pali : *suvarṇa*, *puṇṇa* (BhN) for *suvarṇa*, *puṇṇa*. An instance of assimilation which is the same as in Pali : *Pradyumna* (BhN) for *Pradyumna*, Pali *Prajjunna*. Dropping of *v* in the assimilation of *śvāsa*, *samucchāsa* (BhN) for *samucchvāsa*". (*Indian Historical Quarterly*, September, 1947).

**INDO-EUROPEAN ORIGIN:** Whether in their Arctic home (Tilak's *Arctic Home of the Vedas*) or in the highest elevation of central Asia (Max Muller's *Science of Language*, Vol. 1, p. 28) or in the southern Russia (George Howell's *Soul of India*, p. 28), the speakers of about eight groups of Indo-European languages as Germanic or Teutonic, Celtic, Italic, Hellenic, Balto-Slavonic, Zend, and Indo-Iranian appear to have lived together before they marched out group by group and became the parent stock of those speakers in different countries of Europe and Asia (Classen's *Outlines of History of the English Language*). Of these the first four, namely, the Teutonic, Celtic, Italic and the Hellenic seem to be the first to leave their original home for the countries they have since occupied (Grierson's *Linguistic Survey of India*).

According to Grierson, the peculiarities of this first batch is the pronunciation of 's' as 'k' e.g. Sanskrit 'Śatam' Latin 'Kentum'. "Most of the former who used some word cognate to Latin centum (i.e. kentum) for the numeral 'hundred' became the parent of that spoken by the Greek, Latin, Keltic and Teutonic races". (L.S.I.) But Schlecher opines that Celts are the first to leave their original home and they were followed by the Teuton-Slav, the Greek-Hellenic and then the Indo-Iranians in order.

Again, according to Grierson, the second batch of the Indo-European speakers who left their original home were characterized by their pronunciation of 'k' as 'ś' e.g. Latin 'canin' Sanskrit 'Swan' which pronunciation the Indo-European speakers in their home have since adopted. Indo-Iranians and Albanians are among others who are included in this batch. Dr. Uhlenbeck supports this when he says; "The Indo-German 'k' became 'ś' in the Aryan period". This group may be called the 'Śatam' and the former 'Kentum'. But there are many non-Sanskrit words in Assamese which really belong to the Kentum rather than to 'Śatam' group of which Indo-Aryan or Sanskrit is a member. The type of such Assamese words is 'dāk' (to bite or sting) equivalent to Sanskrit 'Daps' and Greek (a member of the Kentum group) 'damkām'.

**X PRONUNCIATION IN ASAMĪYA:** Another peculiarity of Assamese is its X pronunciation of the letters ś, ṣ and s. Casual critics would dismiss it in one phrase by attributing it to 'non-Aryan predominance'. But those who are familiar both with the people and speech of this country will realise that it is the non-Aryans mainly who find it difficult to pronounce this X sound which is an intermediate sound between kh and h, and they would either pronounce it as the former or as the latter. On the authority of Dr. Sunitikumar Chatterji, among others, we know that this X pronunciation was there in the original Indo-European family of speech:

"It seems that in certain forms of O.I.A. (old Indo-Aryan) the X sound was the actually one employed for 'sh' as can be inferred from a mediaeval pronunciation of sh as kh being the nearest M.I.A. approximation to the traditional X". This X pronunciation according to Dr. Chatterji remained in the Vedas as in "TataX kim". "The change of initial, intervocal and final s to the guttural spirant (X) in Assamese is something remarkable and is paralleled by what we see in Sinhalese and Kashmiri. This is also noticeable in Iranian, Hellenic and Celtic". (O.D.B.L.). Instances in Assamese of change of 'd' to 'j' without the addition of y, as in: Sans. 'dah' (to burn), Asm. jah (hot); Sans. 'dāh' (burning) Asm. Jāh (burning) and so forth, show something of a remnant of old Indo-Aryan or Indo-Germanic characteristic; as Dr. Chatterji puts it: "Change of 'd' to 'j' through the influence of a near palatal vowel is an extremely rare phenomenon in Indo-Aryan although change of dy, dhy, to 'j' and 'jh' is regular law". (O.D.B.L.). Macdonnell also opines: "The cerebrals are mainly Indian products. They are rare in the Rig Veda where they occur medially and finally only". (*Vedic Grammar*). Bhandarkar seems to hold the same view: "The characteristics of not changing dentals to cerebrals and even the dentalising of cerebrals would appear to be truly Aryan. It might be due to an Aryan tribe that remained longer in the original seat of the race and emigrated to India at late period and settled on the borders". (*Philological Essays*).

All these evidences may point to the conclusion already hinted that a current of pre-Vedic Aryans entered Assam either through the north-east gate as most of the Assamese scholars opine; or as European scholars like Pargiter and Rhys Davis (in his *Buddhist India*) think, a race of non-Vedic Aryans came by the foot of the Himalayas and being unable however to settle in central India went to extreme west and extreme east of India and settled there. Any way, the Kalitas of Assam in all probability belonged to this race of non-Vedic Aryans, and king Naraka possibly hailed from this race. Nagendranath Basu, the reputed author of *Viswa Koṣ*, mentions that Naraka once ruled in Sindh and Cutch, a tradition highly afloat in those countries (*Social History of Kamarupa*). Even the Sanskrit Rāmāyaṇa (Bombay Edition, Kṛishkindhya Kāṇḍo, ch. 42) refers to king Naraka as ruling in western

India. This simply shows that the Naraka tradition of east also prevailed in west India among this one and the same band of pre-Vedic Aryans or that their line settling in the west also named their ruler Naraka after this great Naraka of the east.

On the authority of Macdonnell we know: "In the Rig Veda, 'Asur' was predominantly, a designation of the gods". So both 'Sur' and 'Asur' had the same meaning originally. This prefix 'a' does not necessarily mean 'non'—for example. The absence of cerebrals in Assamese are worthy of special note; for scholars like Macdonnell opine: "The cerebrals are entirely secondary, being a specially Indian product and unknown in the Indo-European period. They are probably due to aboriginal, especially Dravidian influence". (*Vedic Grammar*, 8). We may quote here a few instances of pre-Vedic vocabulary in Assamese from Medhi's A. G. & O. A. L., pp. XXIII-XXV): Asm. Abu (grand-mother), Lt. av-us (grand-father); Lt. avia (grandmother); Asm. Ātā (grandfather), Gk and Lt. atta (salutation used to old man equivalent to father), Goth, Attan (father); Asm. Uruli (thrilling sound uttered by women in concert on auspicious occasions), Lt. Ululo (to howl), Gk. Ololuzo (howl), V. Ululit (howling); Asm. Geri (shout), Gk. Gerys (voice) and geryo (I proclaim); Poali (the young of an animal or bird) Lt. Puellus, Puella (a boy, a girl), and Pullus (the young of an animal); Asm. Mina, Lt. Minā (ornament of gold) ad so forth.

The same work, (A. G. & O. A. L.) gives another list of Vedic vocabulary in Assamese besides Vedic forms in use. A few of such words are: Asm. Ayati (a woman having husband), V. Ayaji (woman having husband. Rk. 1,28,7); khāru (anklets or armlets", Rk. V. 54.11 etc. etc. Asm. Nirgat (shameless) V. Nigut (enemy, non-Aryan foe: Rk. IX, 97, 53-54); Asm. Paḷu, (caterpillar) V. Plusi ("name of some noxious insect in Rig Veda); Asm. Beji (a needle) V. Vesi (a needle; Rk. VII, 18,17); Asm. Bhem (pride, ostension), V. Bhema (to take pride: Rk. 1, 11, 2); Asm. Mena (drooping horned buffalo), V. Mena (lit. female of an animal, either mare or cow; Rk. 1,62,7) and so forth.

**AN ISLAND OF ARYAN SPEECH:** Asamiyā is rightly called an island of Aryan speech in a sea of non-Aryan dialects; and even like the island it has preserved its identity apart from the sea. Indeed seeing the situation to which it is subjected, one could hardly expect that non-Aryan influence on Asamiyā should be almost nominal. It may be enough to say that the Tāi invaders who ruled this country for six hundred years have not left even a handful of words in Asamiyā vocabulary. Their river names beginning with nām, as Nāmdang, are few that have survived, far from replacing the earlier Bodo names as Dikhau which they called Nāmcān. Also besides the few river names, the old Tibeto-Burman language also has contributed very little to the vocabulary. As regards the alleged Austro-Asiatic influence on Asamiyā language, all that has been or can be suggested is indeed "nothing more than mere comparison". And yet, compared with

Bengali, for instance, the stock of non-Sanskritic words is undoubtedly considerable. The only explanation for this fact is suggested by the most ancient and solid Aryan colonisation of this country by the Mediterranean-cum-Alpine population about the third millenium B.C., from the days of Naraka and Bhagadatta, shrouded in legends, down through the Varman kings. This race has not only defied the non-Aryans, at least in regard to creed and culture including language, but might probably be responsible for laying the foundation stone of the complex Bihu (Bisuva) culture of Asam. by their first astronomical contribution to India with Biṣuva (Equator) data.

Like the speech, the Asamīyā script is a member of the Kutil branch of the Gupta group of the Brāhmī family of alphabet, along with her uterine sister Maithili. The so-called Bengali script, like the speech, neither had nor has been really different from Asamīyā as alphabet; the earliest scripts available, like the manuscript of *Kṛṣṇa Kīrttan* may give clear evidence to this fact. This Asamīyā script has come down from at least the Nidhanpur inscription in a regular and continuous process of evolution till about the nineteenth century when the first Bengali campaign started by Carey and others of the Śrirāmpur Mission and then the Asamīyā campaign started by Brown and others of the Baptist Mission began printing books in these languages with types cast in one and the same foundry, whence come the mislabelling of the script as Bengali. While in alphabet Asamīyā and Bengali differ in one letter or two, in speech the gulf had been made more profound these two couples of centuries; but all the same, it may not be impossible, not only for East India, but for United India to be soon under one common banner of an empirical language.

## BOOK TWO

### EARLY MEDIAEVAL ASAMĪYĀ LITERATURE

#### I. THE PRELIMINARY FACTS OF THE PERIOD

**HISTORICAL SUMMARY:** Kumār Bhāṣkar Varman's reign in the first half of the seventh century is quite well-founded, from as many as three very reliable sources, namely Yuān Chwāng's *Travels*, Bāna Bhatta's *Harṣa Carit*, and Copperplate grants of old Kāmarūpa Kings including that of the Kumār himself (Neog's *Introduction to Assam*, Bombay, 1947, pp. 22-23). Valuable Chinese records mentioning Bhāṣkar as King of Eastern India (Majumdar's *History of Bengal*, Vol. i, No. v., pp. 77-85) and the fact of this King issuing a royal edict from his victorious Camp at Karṇa Survaṇa, the old capital of the Bengal King, ŚĀśānka, (Nidhānpur Inscription, *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. xii, No. 13) are enough to show that he had sway over the whole of Eastern India. While the Varman line of the old Kamarupa Kings ended with the Kumāra, he was succeeded by another line of twenty one Kings headed by Śālastambha Mlecchādhinātha. Indeed the stone inscription of Jayadeva, King of Nepal, who married Rājyamati, "Bhagadatta rājakulajā" and daughter of Śrī Harṣadeva of this line, styles this Kāmarupa King as "Gaudrādi Kalinga Kośalapati" or the Supreme Lord of the modern provinces of Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Ganjam, and this inscription is dated 153 years of the Tibetan era equivalent to 784 A.C. (*Indian Antiquary*, Vol. ix, p. 178, v. 15). This line of twenty one Kings which ended with Tyaga Sinha, was succeeded by the Pala Kings of Kāmarupa, led by Brahmapāla about the middle of the tenth century, and ending probably with Dharmapāla in the middle of the twelfth century. All these three lines of Kāmarūpa Kings used the same seal of an elephant and claimed a common descent from Naraka, Bhagadatta and others. The earliest name of the country appears to be Prāgyjotiṣa from innumerable references in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, while Kalidasa and the *Kālikā Puraṇa* and other sources down to the eleventh century refer to this country both as Prāgyjotiṣa and Kāmarūpa (Neog's *Introduction to Assam*, pp. 9-20). The earliest capital known as Pragjyotiṣpura, is identified with the modern town of Gauhati and it was subsequently transferred to Hārappeswara, near about the modern town of Tezpur, and then to Durjaya, probably in the present Nowgong district, and lastly to Kāmarupa Nagar, perhaps



Kamatāpura in modern Koç Behar. (ibid, pp. 39-48). All the Kāmarūpa Kings down to Dharmapāla seem to have maintained, more or less, the prestige of Bhāskar Varmā and his great ancestors at least in regard to territorial aggrandisement (ibid, pp. 54-60).

**RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND:** Bāṇa Bhatta really styles Bhāskar Varma as a staunch Śaivite when he describes how Hamsabega, Bhāskar's ambassador, conveyed his message, saying "Ayamasya ca Śaiśabādārabhya samkalpah stheyān Sthānupādāravindadvayādṛte nāhamanyam namaskuryāmi", that is, this had been Bhaskar's firm resolve since his childhood that before none should he ever lower his head save and except the lotus feet of Śiva (Harṣa Carita, ch. iii, pp. 585-86). All the available copperplate grants of old Kāmarūpa kings from Bhāskar down to Dharmapāl, actually invokes Śiva as the main deity save the third and last copper grant of Dharmapāl where he invokes Viṣṇu in place of Śiva although in this king's own earlier inscriptions we find the traditional god Śiva invoked. The records of the Prince of Travellers, Yuān Chwāng, on the other hand, affirm that Bhāskar Varma, "the reigning king—who was a Brāhmiṇ by caste and descendant of Nārāyana Deva" had distinct Buddhist leanings in as much as he respected the Brāhmaṇs-Śramanas alike, invited and rendered hospitality to the Master of the Law himself. Also Kumār Bhāskar joined hands with Kumār Śiladitya, and put Narendra Gupta, Śaśāṅka, of Bengal, down, when the latter wanted to destroy the Buddhist monuments at Patna and Gaya by invading Magadha. Bhaskar's sympathy with the Buddhist faith is still better confirmed by his own Nidhanpur grant where after invoking "Devam Śāśisekharam Priyampinākinam bhaṣmakaṇairbibhuṣitam", Śiva, he, at once, pays homage to Dhamma one of the Buddhist Triratnas, as "Jayati Jagadeka-bandhurlokadhitayasya sampada hetuh" (Nidhanpur Inscription, v. 3 *Epigraphia Indica*, vol. xii, No. 13). Besides occasional references to Pārvatī in the land-grants of these ancient kings of Kāmarūpa, two great Sanskrit works of all India reputation, namely the *Kālikā Purāṇa* and the *Yoginī Tantra*, considered to have been written in Kāmarūpa itself in the tenth and fifteenth century respectively, show tremendous influence of Śāktism and Tāntricism in Asam of those days. Even Ahom and the Muhammadan invaders who came to Asam about the thirteenth century found the earlier rulers of this land, the Kachārīs, the Cutiyās and the Bāra Bhuyāns all staunch worshippers of goddesses in some form or other. Then Vaiṣṇavism. Though we find Viṣṇu directly invoked in the third copper plate grant of Dharma Pāl of the early twelfth century, throwing off the traditional god of hundreds of years of the line of Naraka, namely Śiva, yet there seems no doubt



that Vaiṣṇavism was peeping into Asam several hundred years before it. The second copper plate grant of king Indrapāla of the middle of the eleventh century contains a very interesting unwritten record on this point. While the inscription faithfully follows the tradition of invoking Śiva, scribe engravers fill the space in the last plate with five symbols, namely mace, the Garuḍa, the lotus, the conch-shell and the wheel of Viṣṇu, proving that though the king professed Śaivism, yet a good number of his people were inclined to do Vaiṣṇavite form of Hinduism. Thus the Assamese society then consisted of Buddhists, Śaivites, Śāktas, Tāntrics and Vaiṣṇavites.

**LINGUISTIC PECULIARITIES:** Yūān Chwāng's historic statement that the language of Kamarupa "differs a little from that of mid-India" (Beal's Records, Vol. ii, p. 195), is of course the first milestone for the survey of early Assamese speech. But scholars wondered where to test the truth of his statement as no specimen of Assamese speech of such an early period really existed, nor did any early grammarian assign any Prākṛt for Assamese. Hence in absence of any direct evidence, Māgadhī was considered to be the parent Prākṛt of Assamese, as of Bengali, though early Assamese or even Bengali actually did not conform to the canons of Māgadhī in any details. We have the annotated critical edition of all the copper plate inscriptions of the old Kāmarūpa Kings from the early seventh down to early twelfth century, and credit goes mainly to the scholarship of late Mahamahapādhyāya Padmanath Bhattācārya's *Kāmrūp Śāsanāvalī*. The great Sanskrit scholar, in his over-earnestness to present the inscriptions in 'correct Sanskrit', made really an unauthorised attempt to change the texts here and there, for his purpose. Fortunately, however he did not fail to put in record the true readings of the texts in footnotes. A careful study of these original readings of the inscriptions reveals that there was indeed some regularity in these apparent irregularities and hence they cannot be dismissed summarily by laying all the blame at the door of the local composers or of the scribe-engravers. Tripitakācārya Dr. Beṇī Mādhav Baruā (*Miscellany. The Scribe Engravers of Indrapāla's Second copper-plate and Prākṛit of Pre-Āhom-Times. Indian Historical Quarterly*, September, 1947) clearly shows the system of the so-called unsystematic or so-called wrong spelling, grammar and vocabulary, which really indicate the true nature of Prākṛitism prevalent in those days, tending to mark the differentiation of the speech of Kāmarūpa from that of mid-India as noted by Yūān Chwāng. As regards vocabulary, in Indrapāla's second inscription, for example, we find "siri" (against Sanskrit "Śri") as invariably found in Pāli, and this is a Bodo name for 'a river', evidenced by so many river names for Asam as Dhan-Siri, Suvan-Siri and so forth. In the first copper plate of Dharmapāla such common Assamese

names of trees as *Jhari*, *Odiamma* are found. In *Bhaskar's Nidhanpur* inscription itself we find lots of instances showing such peculiarities of Assamese grammar as shortening of long vowels e.g., "*Kośiko*" for "*Kauśikah*", "*Chandogya*" for "*Chāndogya*" and so forth; absence of *San-dhi*, e.g., "*Hariadbhuta*" for "*Haryadbhuta*", "*tebhyo akṣarāṇi*" for "*tebhyo'kṣarāṇi*" and so on. Such instances of *Prākṛtism* are of course regular indeed. Then coming to the Buddhist songs, *Cayāpadas* and *Dohās*, we find still more striking peculiarities of Assamese spelling, grammar and vocabulary which could never be mere accidental, to be sure. So we may say we have at last found the *Prākṛt* of Assam long sought for.

## II. ORIGINAL OUTBURSTS OF POPULAR POETRY

**FOLK SONGS :** Like all other literatures of the world, the earliest Asamiyā literature must have been oral. It must have consisted of nursery rhymes and ballads and folk-tales of nature-myths that formed the early religion of every primitive race. So like other peoples of the time, the oldest Asamiyā people were "singing folk"; but the songs were not recorded till of late, with the result that they have suffered immense change, so-much-so that their identities now seem to be lost.

So while we may not deny that some of the songs, ballads and folk-tales of nature-myths must have first been produced even about thousands of years ago we have really small means to identify them today and are hence unable to place them in that remote period. For being transmitted orally from generation to generation, they have probably lost their primitive forms and have by and by become modernised till some of them are now recorded.

All the same we have to commit to the fact that the general outburst of lyric and pastoral songs, the expression of popular feeling, began very early indeed, surely before the pre-Vaiṣṇavite period and probably not later than the seventh century A.D. They do not seem to have been recorded till of late, certainly not before the seventeenth or eighteenth century; for Vaiṣṇavite ideas still predominated, and these were after all secular songs.

It has been argued: "The marriage songs of Assam and a few pastoral ballads are the only literary productions that have come down to the present age. Some of the marriage songs are supposed to be as old as the rape of *Rukmini*, the daughter of *Bhismaka* who ruled over *Sadiya* as a contemporary of *Naraka* and *Vāṇa* and they have kept green the memory of that prehistoric event of Assam." (*Asamiyā Sāhit-*

yar Cāneki, Part 1. Vol. I. "A Note on Assamese Language and Literature", p. lix) This seems a bit too uncritical. The quotations from Assamese marriage songs in the Cāneki not only include those about Kṛṣṇa-Rukmiṇī (pp. 16-18), but they also embrace those about Hara Gaurī (pp. 14-15), Rām-Sītā (pp. 15-16), and Uṣā-Aniruddha (pp. 18-19); and they are all equally "green" and alive with the freshness of creative genius of a highly imaginative race. There appears absolutely nothing to differentiate the marriage songs of Kṛṣṇa-Rukmiṇī from others.

The very epithet "nām" applied to all the pastoral songs betray a Vaiṣṇavite influence. They are all called Dhāi Nām (nursery rhymes), Āi, Nām (songs about the goddess), Biā Nām (marriage songs), Bihu Nām, Ban-Ghoṣā (Forest songs), and Garakhīā Nām (cowherd songs), and so forth. The words "Git" or "Gān" are never used in respect of these songs, which fact clearly shows their indirect affiliation to Nām-Dharma of Asam Vaiṣṇavism emphasising the reciting of the name of God. The marriage songs woven about the Epic and Puranic stories including those of Kṛṣṇa-Rukmiṇī themselves furnish a direct proof of Vaiṣṇavite influence, being themes culled from the Epics and Purāṇas as immensely popularised by the Vaiṣṇava writers by rendering them into Assamese verse and prose. Not only this, in most cases, verses from the Vaiṣṇavite writers as Śāṅkardew are also sung where they suit to supplement the oral composition of the female singers.

But some nursery rhymes, by their very ideas and beliefs, if not so definitely by their language, seem comparatively very old. A few of them are quoted as illustrations:

"Śiāli ee, nāhibi rāti;  
Tore kāṇe kāti lagām vāti.  
Śiālir mūrare maruā phul;  
Śiāli pālegai Ratanpur".

'O Vixen, come not at night;  
Shall I cut thy ears, light a light.  
'The Maruwā bud on vixen's head;  
Lo, the vixen to Ratanpur fled'.

"O phul, O phul nuphula kio ?  
Garuwe je āg khāy, phulimno kio ?  
O garu, O garu, āg khāo kio ?  
Garakhīāi je mok narakhe, nākhāmno kio ?  
O garakhīā, O garakhīā, garu narakha kio ?  
Rāndhaniye je bhāt nidiye, garu rakhim kio ?".....  
O megh, O megh barasun dio kio ?  
Bhekuliye je tortorāy, nidimno kio ?  
O bhekuli, O bhekuli, tortorāo kio ?

Bopā- kakār vrittito erimno kio"?

'O bud, O bud, you do not blossom; why ?'  
 'The cow eats my leaves; blossom why should I ?'  
 'O cow, O cow, you eat leaves; why ?'  
 'The cowherd does not keep me; why should not I ?'  
 'O cowherd, O cowherd, you keep not the cow; why ?'  
 'The cook does not give me food; why should I ?'....  
 'O cloud, O cloud, you often rain; why ?'  
 'The frog cries; why should not I ?'  
 'O frog, O frog, you often cry; why ?'  
 'The practice of my ancestors why should leave I ?'

NATURE MYTHS: Also some riddles, proverbs and folk-tales or nature-myths, for the reasons assigned, appear to be comparatively more ancient, though Vaiṣṇavite interpretations are sometimes attached to the riddles (Phakarā).

"Kathilei kathā, mathilei ghiu;  
 Bhātat diā hānh kaṇīr keni jāy jiu."

'Words are produced being spoken; ghee is produced being churned. Which way does the life-breath fly when a duck's egg is boiled with rice ?

"Burhī-Āi ai, nāhili sukhar kālat;  
 Sāt janī nigani khirāi khāichilō,  
 Gerelāk bāichilō hālat".

"O grand-mother, you did not turn up in my days of prosperity. I milked seven female mice and ploughed with gerelā (an animal like young jackals)." Some proverbs too appear by their nature to be comparatively much older (*Some Assamese Proverbs* by Col. P.R.T. Gurdon):

"Topani cikun puā; Katāri cikun guā;  
 Jakāi bāonte choāli cāba, dekhi kenekuā".

'Sleep is beautiful when enjoyed in the morning, the knife is beautiful when used to cut areca nuts; O, admire the beauty of girls when using their bamboo scoops, in catching fish". Similarly some folk-tales or nature-myths by the very treatment of their themes look much older. (*Kakā Deutā āru Nāti Larā, Burhī Āir Sādhu*, etc.). One such folklore connected with the following lines appears to be extremely ancient in ideas:

"Okani sakhī mari gal, bage barat kare;  
 Luit phenā, mah menā, gac nipātī, kapau kaṇā", etc.

"The friend louse dies and for her sake the crane observes fasts; the Brahmaputra foams, the horns of the buffalo are drooping; trees lose leaves, the wild pigeon becomes blind."

But this mass of oral literature in general shows a mercurial fickleness which baffles any attempt at demarcation in regard to time. Dates of their composition have an unusually long range indeed extending upto very recent times.

The latest collection of nursery rhymes (*Putali*, 1943) contains a number of such lullaby and songs of different sports by children; and the second part contains more songs of lullaby comparatively of much later date, as its text may show.

"Bāpukan dhuniā, dhal pātar curiā, mūrat henguliā chāti:  
Bātar bātaruāi, rai rai sudhiche, kon biṣayāre nāti."

'My little son is beautiful. He wears a loin-cloth of milk-white silk. He has an umbrella of vermilion colour above his head. Every passer-by on the street stops and asks what royal officer's grandson he must be.'

"Bhāt khāi Mainā, dolāte uthile, pānī khāi Mainā sowe:  
Tāmōl khāi Mainā, selengi lāgile, dolā kāti hai pare."

'My lovely Bird rides the litter after eating food. My lovely Bird sleeps after drinking water. My lovely Bird feels excited and flushed by chewing betelnut after meal. Lo! the litter lies upset.'

"Lāi hāle-jāle ābeli batāhe, laphā hāle-jāle pāte:  
Āmāre Mainā, hāliche-jāliche, kāli dupariār bhāte."

'The slender vegetable flutters in the afternoon breeze. The leaves of another soft vegetable flutters likewise. Our lovely Bird flutters, for he has no meal since the last noon.'

"Gā helimeli kariche Bopādewr, hale śayanare beli:  
Caku tire-bire kariche Bopādewr, loāhi pātite leti."

'My young Master feels giddiness, for it is time to sleep. Eyes of my young Master glitter; so do come and lie on your bed.'

MANI KOWARAR GIT: Nevertheless there is a type of folk-literature to which an appropriate date can be assigned with some confidence. It is the ballads; and it is the ballads of Maṇi Kōwar and Phul Kōwar with which we are immediately concerned. We have been able to say this with some certainty simply because these ballads are as associated with Prince Maṇi and Prince Phul, respectively the son and grandson of king Śaṅkalādib. Authorities are not unanimous on the point of Śaṅkal's time. According to Mahamed Kasim Firishta (*History of the Rise of the Muhammadan Power in India*, Vol. I of 1908), he was a contemporary of Kaikoos and Keikhoosraw to whom king Kedar Brahman used to transmit annual tribute, king Kedar Brahman's

empire, in the latter part of his reign, being usurped by Śaṅkal who also subdued Bengal and Behar, and established the city of Gauda, or Lakshnawati, which remained the capital of Bengal for two thousand years till the Muhammadan invasion about the thirteenth century. It means that Śaṅkal must have flourished about the seventh century B.C.

It is said that Śaṅkal was at last defeated in the decisive battle at Ghorāghāt in the Rungpur district where Śaṅkal displayed great power against the invincible army of Afrasiab led by Peerauwisa. Another version says that Śaṅkal was killed by Rustum, the Persian Hercules, who flourished about seventh century B.C., and this corroborates the above fact. But according to Maulavi Abdus Salam, (Translation from Riyazus Salatin, p. 56), Firdausi in his great epic, *Shāh-Nāmā*, mentions the Indian Prince Śaṅkal in connection with the adventures of Bahram Gaur, a Persian monarch of the Sassanian dynasty who reigned in the middle of the fourth century A.D.

This discrepancy of about one thousand years is accounted for by the fact that "Afrasiab" is no proper name but a mere title like "Vikramāditya", and simply means 'a conqueror of Persia', and that though the original Afrasiab might have conquered Persia about seven centuries before the Christian era, the one whom Śaṅkal encountered might have been a later king of that dynasty assuming the title of Afrasiāb. But then the fact that Lakshanawati or Gaur established by Śaṅkal remained the capital of Bengal for two thousand years before the Muhammadans shifted it to Tunda in the thirteenth century becomes untenable.

At any rate the ballads about Maṇi Kōwar and Ful Kōwar, even by the original conception with which they are hallowed must have taken shape sometime before 1100 A.D. And thus far one can state and no farther. In their present forms they contain perhaps only portions of the original. Even the name of Śaṅkaldib is sometimes corrupted into 'Śaṅkhadew' or 'Śaṅkardew', and this with interpolation of various words and practices of the post-twelfth century misled uncritical critics to assign a very later date to the composition of these ballads, evidently wrongly. Further explanation for intrusion of words and even practices of a later date may not be deemed necessary when one remembers that these ballads were not recorded till of late. Even the prologue to Maṇi Kōwar Gīt has a primitive freshness unsurpassed by any subsequent historical ballad in the language.

'Maṇi Kōwar, the son of Śaṅkaldib, was incessantly in the lap of some one or other. (When grown up) he would spend a part of the day in the litter, another part on the horseback, and still another in playing....

Not being content with playing, he had gone to bathe in the river. As many as ten dozen maids drew water for the Prince, yet he was not satisfied.... The gold chains off his hands and others off his legs, and the necklace off his neck, he gave them all to his personal attendant. Thus keeping off all his ornaments he had gone to bathe in the river. From the sole-deep water he went to the neck-deep in the river, and yet he was not satisfied,....The beautiful Prince gave a plunge by making the Moon and the Sun his witnesses....He gave another plunge by looking to his own city....And while he was about to give another plunge he was kidnapped by the river-god..... At this the Prince's young attendant had gone to inform of it to his princess Kācan. Kācan cried being wild with grief and tore her hair....'O my Prince, do appear before me by emerging out of the water and let us go together to the same country.....From the sole-deep to the neck-deep water in the river she got down; but could not find the Prince.....

PHUL KOWARAR GIT: The ballad of Phul Kowar, rather complementary, is even more exquisite, opening with the prologue:

'Mani Kowar, the son of Śaṅkalādib, was drowned in water; Kācan, the daughter-in-law, remained a burden of responsibility to Śaṅkalādib. Prince Mani was searched up and down the country, but was not found; Kācan, the daughter-in-law of Śaṅkalādib, had conception six months old; and a little today, a little more to-morrow, (the middle part of) her body became prominent. Indisposed to-day, indisposed to-morrow, and thus the womb moved: at the middle of night on Tuesday a prince was born to Kācan. The gun of the storehouse was fired, the elephants cried, and king Śaṅkalādib looked to his personal attendant and said....'Go and see what sounds are echoing in the deserted city.'....The young attendant turned up to say 'The gun of the storehouse was fired, the elephants cried, and at the middle of night on Tuesday a grandson was born to His Majesty. Also the moment the posthumous prince was born as many as seven earthquakes rolled.' And on hearing this he was glad at heart....'Go and escort there my hundred and twenty princesses from their palaces.....Thrice did the hallelujah resound when the umbilical cord of the prince was severed; and the grandmother (Śaṅkalādib's queen) was witnessing the ceremony when the hundred and twenty princesses were bathing the baby.....Water from the seven seas was brought for his bathing....The Moon and the Sun and all the gods of heaven were invoked to witness the ceremony, when the prince, an orphan, was named Phul Kōwar'.

The latter part of the story relates how Phul Kōwar grew up and made his wonderful adventure in quest of his father:

'The seven-storied heaven was built by piling one heaven upon another. The sun drives his chariot with as many as seven horses and illumines even the hell. Of whose womb had been born the twin sisters called Day and Night?....and the carpenter has made a wooden horse that fly through the sky. The king repeatedly asks: "Who can ride on it?" Prince Phul saluted and went to ride by greeting it. 'O king of birds, do rise high with one stroke of your tail and utter a shrill sound.



with your mouth: do know, O wooden flying horse, we share the same life-breath.' Prince Phul then rode on the wooden flying horse and gave a lash of the scourge; and in a moment it flew and took its path in the air. By giving seven rounds in the city the flying horse flew away to a distance of six months. Phul Kōwar leaves his father's country on the wooden flying horse: it flies like the lightning, and not to speak of men even the gods could not follow its sight. But who can change what is predestined by God? So Phul Kōwar looked back to ascertain how far he had come. That moment he met the curse of his preceptor (whom he disobeyed by looking back) and one wing of the horse suddenly broke; and the wooden flying horse fell down upon a flower garden lying fallow and barren for twelve years, all plants and roots withering.

A FLOWER EPIC: So we come to the most exquisite portion of the ballad describing the happenings of Phul Kōwar in the garden almost as Spring personified in Western mythology.

'After falling in the garden of the Mālini, Phul Kōwar gave a push with his toes; and Seutī, Mālatī, Tagar, Gutimali and all other flower plants began to have roots. After leaving the wooden flying horse when Phul Kōwar played on the conch with his mouth, Seutī, Mālatī and all other flower plants began to have shoots; and then Seutī Mālatī and other flower plants began to have branches. After falling in the garden of the Mālinī, Phul Kōwar stretched his hands on four sides; and Seutī, Mālatī and all other flower plants began to have leaves. After leaving the wooden flying horse, Phul Kōwar threw stones on four sides; and Seutī, Mālatī and all other flower plants began to bud. After falling in the garden of the Mālini, Phul Kōwar smiled gently; and Seutī, Mālatī and all other flower plants began to have petals. After leaving the wooden flying horse Phul Kōwar threw lances on four sides; and Seutī and Mālatī and all other plants began to have flowers. Phul Kōwar was enjoying in the garden by counting flowers, this and that; and the passers-by had a pleasant surprise to see the flowers glittering. One would say 'O Mālinī,' and the other would say, 'O Mālinī, what must be your luck? The garden that was lying so barren for these long twelve years is now shedding such lustre!'

To be brief, like the Premature Spring described in the *Kumāra Sambhava* of Kālidasa this event created quite a pleasing sensation all through the neighbourhood, and when the Mālinī came to her garden, she could not believe her eyes. She looked all around the garden and was engrossed in pleasant surprise. When she saw Phul Kōwar she could not ascertain whether he was a man or god; and so she knelt down before him being overwhelmed with gratitude. Phul Kōwar plainly told the woman that he was no god, but the grandson of king Śaṅkalādīb.

On being interrogated whosoever she might be, she introduced herself as the female gardener, Dijāi by name, whose main business



was to supply flowers to Pastulā, the princess of the city. Phul Kōwar then asked her to give him some food as he had none for those long seven days. The Mālinī hesitated to take him to her house for its wretched state, but the Prince encouraged her saying that he would not mind it and that she would perhaps prosper forthwith by the act of such hospitality. And so she agreed.

To her great embarrassment, the Mālinī lost her house, for she saw a beautiful building with materials of gold and silver and other precious stones on where her cottage stood. The prince helped her to identify her house where he was served with the best of food keeping with the dignity of the new building. Not only so, she felt within her that Phul Kōwar would be the fittest bridegroom for her princess, Pastulā. However, by a mutual agreement, Phul Kōwar sent Pastulā a garland woven with his own hands without the help of any string through the Mālinī in the strictest secrecy. And it was no average garland of course. 'He stringed in flowers, wrote in flowers and sent his message in flowers.' This worked wonders compelling Pastulā to invite Phul Kōwar to her abode in secret.

'Be a god and hold me with thy charm;  
Be a man and hold me with thy arm'.

Thus the story ends in love-intrigue, the last part resembling the love-affairs between Uṣā and Aniruddha of Puranic fame. Phul Kōwar was caught in the harem of Pastula 'after their affairs came to an advanced stage, and was subsequently released at the entreaties of Pastulā.

**A UNIVERSAL VEIN:** The whole range of Asamiyā folk-literature including folk-tales and proverbs mainly betrays the habits and manners of an agricultural people, and bears the stamp of such a civilization. The Asamiyā folk-literature also reveals the social history of a very honest and simple folk which the people had been; but this may perhaps be said of folk literature in general having a universal vein. One pastoral Asamiyā song says: 'Yonder the solitary star in front of Sister Moon; and my mother gave me in marriage to a dwarfish bridegroom. 'Well, you dwarf, call me not names, for I shall leave for my mother's house washing my feet. My mother will say, 'Lo, my daughter comes; and I must cook a good meal.' My father will say, 'Here my child comes; and I must kill a duck for her.' My brother will say, 'Lo, my sister comes; and I must get one whole bunch of good areca-nuts.' And my brother's wife will say, 'Alas, my husband's sister comes, and let me break the cover of the boiling pot on her head.' I am getting with me the best cloth off the loom for my father, soda for my mother;

one silken belt for my brother and broomstick for his wife.' Curiously enough, one popular pastoral song of England and Scotland seems quite attuned to it. The English pastoral song runs as follows :

'O what will you give to your father dear ?'  
 'The silver shode steed that brought me here',  
 'What will you leave to your mother dear' ?  
 'My velvet pall and my silken gear'.  
 'What will you leave to your sister Anne' ?  
 'My silken scarf and my gowden fan'.  
 'What will you leave to sister Grace' ?  
 'My bloody cloths to wash and dress'.  
 'What will you leave to your brother John' ?  
 'The gallows-tree to hang him on'.  
 'What will you leave to your brother John's wife' ?  
 'The wilderness to end her life'.

(First quoted in Neog's Preface to *Janā Gābharur Git*, 1925).

### III. BUDDHIST SONGS AND BUDDHISTIC POETRY

CARYAS OR DOHAS : Suniti Kumar Chatterji rightly observes in his *Introduction to A History of Maithili Literature*, "The fact that *Caryapadas* have been claimed for Old Assamese, Old Oriya, Old Maithili (and Old Magahi) as much as for Old Bengali, only demonstrates the close kinship of these languages to one another" (p. x). One can hardly exaggerate the necessity of "a faithful edition" of the Dohās "not contaminated by the copyist or the editor" (p. 116); but a sincere collaboration of Bengali, Maithili, Oriya and Assamese scholars seems no less requisite for the purpose. Dr. Mishra opines that "these twenty-two or twenty-three *Carya Siddhas* lived during the reigns of Dharmapala (796-806 or according to others c. 633), Devapala (809-849) and Mahipala (974-1026)" and tries to locate their birth-places. For instance, he says that Saraha "was born at Rajni in the Pracyadesa" (p. 113 ff), after Rahula Sankṛtyayana and Tibetan works like *Pag-Som-Zon-Zan*, Taranath's *Geschieste* (c. 1500 A.D.) and the *History of the 84 Siddhas* published in German by Arthur Grunwedel." Also Dr. Giuseppe Tucci, on the authority of the Tibetan works *Grub to'b* and *bka'babs bdun*, refers to one Siddha Minanātha, a fisherman from Kāmarūpa. Taranath as well mentions this Siddha Minanātha, as a fisherman in this Eastern Country and the two beautiful couplets attributed to Minanāth and grafted into the Sanskrit commentary of *Carya* 21 are quoted. There is still a place called Rājni or Rāni in the vicinity of Gauhati in this Eastern Country (Prācya deśa) of Kāmarūpa to which Saraha belongs by the local tradition. So also about Lui Pā and his disciple Dārikapā.

The reign of the Pāla Kings of Kāmarūpa began in the eleventh century and some of them seem to be somehow connected with some of the Siddhas. Kāhnupāda Kṛṣṇācārya, the poet of as many as 13 caryas, and reputed to be the seventeenth in order of the 84 Siddhas, acknowledges himself in his Caryā 36 to be a disciple of Jalandharipāda alias Hādipā who had another disciple in Gopicandra connected with old Kāmarūpa Kings Dharma Pāla and Durlabh at least by strong tradition. Any way, there is much to show that mediaeval Assam was a hot bed of Vajra Yāna monks right upto the hey-day of Saṅkardew's fame.

However there is little in these things to be emphasised and still less to be dogmatised. What is important is the fact that wherever they might have hailed from, they came to live in Magadha where they wrote their songs, and the most important is the text of the songs themselves. Allegations are made against corruptions of the text brought about "by the Nepalese and Maithili scribes" and "Bengali editors" giving a "a Bengali garb"; but the Asamiyās are certainly no party to all this. But alteration of a word or two in many lines of the Caryas can easily make them read like Assamese and make themselves intelligible to any Assamese-knowing reader. Mishra shows the Maithili affinities in the caryās, and some of these affinities are also common to Asamiyā, ancient Asam having long been contiguous and sometimes bordering on a portion of Mithila at the Kosi river in the Purnea district as is seen from the famous copper-plate inscription of Bhāskar Varman (verses 26-28).

**LANGUAGE OF THE DOHAS :** Some of the peculiarities of Asimiya grammar noticed in the Caryās may be noted. Lack and looseness in Sāndhis are seen in Asamiyā even from the oldest Sanskrit inscriptions of at least early seventh century down to the present day; and such words as "nacchainte" in Caryā 42 bear witness to this fact. One of the honorific signs of plural number in Asamiyā is "sakal" (as in Gurusakal), and it is often used as "saala samahiaa" in carya 1, "mandala saala" in carya 16. One of the common feminine Asamiyā suffix is "ni", and is used in such words as "śuṇḍini" in carya 3. The only Asamiyā nominative case-ending for words ending in consonants is e, and it is used exactly as in "Kumbhire Khāa" and "core nila" both in carya 2. The nominative sign in Asamiyā is always dropped with intransitive verbs in general as in "Kāa taruvara panca vi dāla" in carya 1. The accusative sign in Asamiyā is 'kā', and it is used as in "Thākuraka parinivita" in Caryā 12. This accusative sign is dropped in "gauna bhāve" in "bākhorha morhiu" and "bandhana torhiu" carya 9. The instrumental sign in Asamiyā is sometimes "e" as in "Kuthāre chijaa" in Caryā 45 and "joinigale raani pohaa" in carya 19. The Asamiyā genitive 'ra' is used as in "harinār khur" and "harinir nilaa" both in carya 6. The Asamiyā locative "ta" is used in a large number of words as in "duārat" in carya 3, "māngat" in carya 8, "bātat in carya 8 and 14, "dombit" in 18, "tālat", "hārhit" in carya 33, "gaanat" in carya

34, and 50. Old Assamese and even modern Asamīyā in poetry uses *e* in locative as in Sanskrit.

While both *iā* and *i* are found in incomplete verbs in old Asamīyā, modern Asamīyā gives predominance only to the latter which is used profusely as in "erhi" in *carya* 1, "kari" in 3, 38, "cumbi" in 4, "meli" in 6, "dekhi" in 7, "carhi" in 10, "uthi" in 21, "raci" in 22, "dhumi" in 26, "lai" in 36, 138, 47 "tuti" in 37. The negative sign in Asamīyā as opposed to Bengali, is always put before the verb as is abundantly found in "najai" in *caryas* 2, 4, 14, 20, 22, 29, "najivami" in 4, "nacharaan" "nadekhi" in 16, 42, "napābiai" in 26, "nighina" in 10.

It is curiously interesting to note that non-Tatsama words rare even in the so popular Vaiṣṇavite Asamīyā literature occur so nicely in these *Caryas* agreeing exactly, or more or less, with modern Assamese phonology, morphology, and in every day use. To mention a few of such non-Tatsama, words at random from the *Caryas*, with their Asamīyā equivalents and meanings in brackets; c. 1. "eri" (Asm. eri, leaving); "dāl" (Asm. dāl, a branch); c. 2. "tentali" (Asm. tentali, tamarind), "core" (Asm. cor, a thief); "rāti" (Asm. rāti, night); "bāhuri" (Asm. boāri, a daughter-in-law), "samāirha" (Asm. somāila, entered); c. 3. "thira kari" (Asm. thira kari, having decided); "duārat" at the door, "saru" (Asm. saru, small); c. 4. "sāsu" (Asm. sāhu, a mother-in-law), "tai" (Asm. tai, thou; c. 5. "Nai" (Asm. nai, a river), "thāu" (Asm. thāi, space), "sānkama" (Asm. sānko, a bridge), "pati" (Asm. pati, a sheet) c. 6. "meli" (Asm. meli, spreading), "berhila" (Asm. berhila, has surrounded), "hāka" (Asm. hāka, forbidding), "hariṇa" (Asm. hariṇa, a male deer), "hariṇi" (Asm. harini, a female deer), "chupai" (Asm. chuwai, touches), "pāni" (Asm. pāni, water), "Khurā" (Asm. khurā, a hoof), c. 7. "bāt" (Asm. bāt, a path), "dekhi" (Asm. dekhi, having seen), "gai" (Asm. gai, having gone), "Napasai" (Asm. napasai, does not enter); c. 8. "bātat" (Asm. bātāt, on the way), "mili mili" (Asm. mili mili, by uniting); c. 9. "balaga" (Asm. balega, separate), c. 10. "choi choi" (Asm. choi choi, by touching), "nighiṇa" (Asm. nighiṇa, hate not), "paduma" (Asm. paduma, a lotus), "pakhuri", (Asm. pukhuri, a tank), "cari" (cari, riding), "bāparhi" (Bāpari, a pitiful woman), "nāwe" (nāwe, by boat), "molān" (molān, a stick of lotus); c. 11. "sāsu" (sāsu, a mother-in-law), "nanada" (nanada, a sister-in-law); c. 12. "gunia" (guṇia, counting); c. 14. "nāi" (nāo, a boat), "burhili" (burhila, have drowned), "bātat, (bātāt on the way), "sincahu pani" (sincahu pāni, throw away the water), "nalai" (nalai, does not take), "kule, kule bulai" (Kule, kule bulai, walks by the shore); c. 15. "uju bāt" (uju bāt, easy way), "anābāt" (anābāt, wrong way), "sijhai" (sijai, is fulfilled); c. 16. "gājai" (gājai, thunders), "mai" (mai, myself); "lāu" (lāu, a gourd), "hai" (hai, is); c. 18. "mai" (mai, myself), "tai" (tai, thyself), "bolai" (bolai, says), "namelai" (namelai, stretches not), "āgali" (āgali, front part), "cinali" (cinali, introduced); c. 19. "pohrea" (pohai, dawns); c. 20. "kahana najāi" (kahana najāi, indescribable), "bapurha" (bapurā, a pitiful man); c. 21. "tutaa" (tutai, diminishes), "umcal pāmcāl" (ucal pācal, excitedness); c. 22. "raci raci" (raci raci, by composing), "najānahoo" (najānoho, know not), "dhuni dhuni" (dhuni dhuni, scutching), "napābiai" (napābiai, won't get), "bahal"

(bahal, broad), "balaga" (belega, separate), "napaisai" (napasai, enters not); c. 27. "adha rati" (ādhā rāti, midnight); "mai" (mai, myself); c. 28. "gharini" (gharani, wife), "rati pahāi" (rāti puāi, dawns); c. 29. "nahai" (nahai, is not), "najāi" (najāi, goes not), "patiāi" (patiāi, believes), "baknani" (bakhani, explains), "uha" (uha, clue), "bhani" (bhani, saying), "mai" (mai, myself), c. 31. "tali poisaa" (tali paisai, reaches bottom), "ghina" (ghina, hatred), c. 32. "uju" (uju, easy), "dāpan" (dāpon, mirror), "khal" (khāl, a ditch); c. 44. "tālat mor ghar" (tālat mor ghar, at rock my house), "hārhit bhāt nāhi" (hārhit bhāt nāi, no boiled rice in the cooking pot), "bengasa sāpa barhila" (bengese sāpa barhila, the frog extended to a snake), "benta" (benta, a hole), "samāa" (somāi, enters), "balad" (balad, a bull), "bānjhi" (bāñji, barren female), "budhi" (budhi, plan), "cor" (cor, a thief), "niti niti" (nite nite, every day), "siāla" (siāl, a jackal), "jujhaa" (jujhe, fights) c. 35. "etakāl" (etakāl, so much time), "āchilo" (āchilo, I had been), "mai bujhila" (mai bujhilo, I understood); c. 37. "tuti" (ṭuṭi, diminishing), "achile" (achile, had been); c. 38. "cita thira kari" (cita thira kari, settling the mind), "tānaa guna" (tāna gune, pull by the rope), "kulalai khar soṅte ujaa" (Kuḷalai khar sote ujāi, goes up with quick current to the shore); "samāa" (samāi, enters); c. 39. "tai" (tai, thou); "mai" (mai, myself); "gohāli" (gohāli, cowshed), "ekele" (akale, alone), "nasamāa" (nosomāi, does not enter); c. 41. "sāpa dekhi" (sāpa dekhi, snake seeing), "tutai" (ṭuṭai, diminishes), "dāpan" (dāpan, a mirror); c. 42. "soṣai" (soṣe, sucks up), "nadekhai" (nedekhai, does not see); c. 43. "samaa" (somai, enters); c. 45. "bahal pāt" (bahal pāt, broad leaf), "kuthāre chiju" (kuthāre chidai, severs with an axe). "bārhai" (bārhai, increases), "pāni" (pāni, water); "cheva" (cheva, sever), "najānai" (najānai, knows not), "dāl" (dāl, a branch); c. 46. "tutai" (ṭuṭai, diminishes), "nau" (nau, not yet), "nahoi" (nahai, is not); c. 47. "miali" (mihali, mixed), "lai" (lai, taking), "pāni" (pāni, water); c. 49. "khāle" (khāle, by the ditch), "kurhi" (kūrhi, robbing), "āji" (āji, today), "mor" (mor, mine); c. 50. "cāncāli" (cāncāli, a bamboo bier), "kāndai saguna siāli" (kāndai saguna siālī, weep vultures and jackals), "daha-dihe" (dahadihe, in ten directions).

**TIME OF THE SINGING SIDDHAS:** In his Hindi work, *Purātattva Nivandhāvali* 1937, Rāhul Sankrityāyana gives a complete list (pp. 148-154) of the names, castes, countries and the then reigning kings, of the famous 84 Siddhas of the Buddhist faith. It is likely that all these assignments in regard to the respective countries of the Siddhas may Siddhki kabitāki bhāshā āthmi se bārahmi sātābdiki bhāshā hyāy", be open to question in the light of further research. Rahul writes "In (P.T.N., p. 165). We may take this period roughly from 700 to 1100 A.D. According to Rahul, Saraha is the first of these singing Siddhas—"Churāsi Siddhme pratham purush Sarah hi hyāy" (*Ibid*, p. 155). His other names are given as Saraha Pā, Rāhul Bhadra or Saroja Vajra. He is described as a Brahman of Nālanda flourishing in the reign of Dharma Pāl (769-809). Rāhul further writes:—"Purva disme Rājni Nagarme Brāhman Vapsame inkā janma huāthā....Nalandāme

ketnā varshatah vās kia....Savarpād in-kā pradhān sishya thā. Kai Tāntrik Nāgārjun bhi is-kā sishya thā.....Tānjur granthme in-kā vatris granth-ka anubād miltā hyay. Sav Vajra Yān"....(*Ibid.*, pp. 167-68). Rahul says that he hailed from an Eastern country named Rājni which was then under its king Candanapāla. Rājni or Rāni, sixteen miles to the south west of the town of Gauhati in Asam has already been referred to. Right down to the nineteenth century, it was well known as a feudatory to the kingdom of Kāmarūpa under king Ratnapāla.

SARAHĀ PA is said to have been born of a witch by a Brahmin husband, and to have attracted king Ratnapala and his Brahmin ministers to Buddhism by his magic powers. According also to *Pag-Som-Zon-Zan*, the illustrious Tibetan work, Ratnapala was converted to Buddhist tenets of Vajrayāna by Saraha. Further, on the authority of Grunwedel, the translator of the Tibetan works, Ratnapal's grandson Indrapala became a disciple of Luipāda, and wrote many works on the worship of Kalcakra, Cakrasambar, Vajrayogini, Kankalini and other gods, and assumed the Vajrayāna name Darikapā. Padma Vajra and Rāhulabhadra are suggested by Haraprasad to have been the other names of Saraha, and such works as *Dohākosha Giti*, *Dohakosha Chayye Giti*, *Dohakosha Upadesha Giti* etc are attributed to him.

LUIPADA has been mentioned by the late Mahamahopadhyaya as the first Siddhācāryya on the authority of Caryā-cayyavinascaya has been put down also as the first of the thirty-three poets introduced by him. The four Buddhist works Vajra-Sattwa Sādhana, Buddhodaya, Sribhaga, Dabhisamaya and Abhisamayavibhanga are ascribed to him. What the Hīnyān sect of Buddhists would call Abhidhamma, is styled as Abhisamaya by the adherents of the Mahāyān sect, both the terms meaning 'philosophy'. Matsyantrada is said to have been another name of Lui, and his time has been ascertained to be about the tenth century from the fact that his last work, Abhisamayavibhanga is said to have been encouraged by one Dīpankara Srijnān who moved to Tibet in his fifty-eighth year in 1038 from Vikramśil Bihar. His disciples became Siddhācāryyas in succession, Tistipāda being one of them and belonging to his own family and also composing Buddhist songs. But according to *Purā Tattva Nivandhāvali* already quoted, Saraha is the first of the 84 Siddhācāryyas. Any way, like Saraha, Lui Pā, said to be a Kāyastha in the country of Magadha, was also a contemporary of the then reigning king Dharma Pal and really heads the list of the Siddhas (*P.T.N.*, p. 148). Rāhul also states that two of the disciples of Lui Pā were Darik Pā and Dengi Pā who were respectively the king and the minister of Orissa in the Pūrva Āsrama. But Grunwedel, on the authority of

Tibetan works, states that Darik Pā was no other than the Kāmarūpa king, Indrapāla. According to Rāhul too, there are as many as seven works by Lui Pā in the collection of Tanjur, and the five that are in an old language are Abhisamya Vibhanga, Tattwa Svabhava Dohākoshā, Buddhodaya, Bhagavadābhisamaya, and Luipāda Gitikā.

The famous Tibetan work Grub-O-Tub introduced Lui as the son of a fisherman from the country of Kāmarūpa or Asam. And in another Tibetan Buddhist work *Pāg-Som-Zon-Zan*, Lui is mentioned to have been an ordinary officer under king Indrabhuti (Indrapāl?) of the country of Oddian. This country of Oddian or Ojjai or Hojai is now located in Nagāo, Asam. Lui's early name had been Sāmanta Śobhā and was initiated to Buddhist Tantricism by a Siddha named Savari Pād. Lui soon came to wield immense influence in the Buddhist world at Tibet and became the founder of the Buddha Sahajia Dharma. He became well known as Luipada (Lohityapāda?) perhaps, because he happened to hail from the country through which the Lauhitya (Brahmaputra) flows.

MINANATH is mentioned as another Buddhist writer and Macchaghanāth, Matsyendranāth, etc. are said to be amongst his other names. Haraprasad notes that Minanāth is still worshipped by the Buddhists of Nepal as an incarnation of Avalokiteswara. But he enlightens us no further. Dr. G. Tucci, on the authority of some Tibetan manuscripts, states that Minanath was a fisherman flourishing in the old country of Kamarupa. The colophons of the three Buddhist works *Kaula-Jnana-Nirnay*, *Akulavira Tantra* and *Kāmākhyā Guhya Siddhi* variously name their author as Macchindrapāla, Matsyendranātha, Matsyaghna, Minapāda and Minanātha. It has now been almost fully established that they refer to one and the same person who hailed originally from Candradwīpa, now located in Bakharganj situated on the seacoast, but his activities were mainly confined to Kāmarūpa. The colophon to the concluding chapter of the great work, *Akula Vira Tantra*, clearly states that the work was compiled in Kāmarūpa where he is said to have acquired mystic powers by the grace of the Yoginis of the place.

"Iti Macchindrapādābatārite Kāmarūpa sthāne,  
Yogini prasādāt labdham ākulaviram samāptam."

The *Kaula Jnana Nirnay* mentions Kamākhyā as the first and Oddian as a great pīṭha (8/20-21). "Prathamam Pīthamutpannam Kāmākhyā nāma subrae; Oddiāna mahāpīthamupapīthasamanvitam." And this work seems to have had a tremendous popularity throughout Kāmarūpa. (Ibid 22/10-12). "Kāmarūpe imam śāstram Yoginīnām grihe grihe; Candradvipam mahāśāstram avatirnam sulochane."



*Kaula Jnāna Nirṇay* itself shows that the author was a Kaivartta hailing originally from Candradvipa but flourishing in Kāmarūpa in later life. In the course of conversation with Pārvatī, Śiva is said as declaring: "Aham sadhibaro Devi, aham Bireswar priye (27/11)"; "Jadabataritam jñānam Kāmarūpi tvayā mayā (27/21)"; "Abyaktena tu rūpena candradvīpe aham priye." (27/22). Finally in reply to Pārvatī's query: "Kimartham Candradvīpantu Ahancaiba gatah prabhō" (27/22). Śiva gives an explanation: "Jñānatejena sangbhuto durjaya stridasairapi; Brahmatvam hi tadā tyaktam chītabi khibaratmakam." (27/34). "Brahmanosi mahāpūṇye kaivarttatvam mayā kritah; Matsyabhi ghatinairvipra Matsyaghenometi visrutah; Kaibaarttatvam kṛatm jasmāt kaibartto Vipranāyakaā" (23/37).

Rāhul describes Mīna Pā as a fisherman from Kāmarūpa and calls him the forty-sixth disciple of Jalandhar Pā. He calls Mīna Pā the father of Machchendra Pā, (P.T.N., p. 148) who in turn said to be the religious preceptor of Gorakṣapa while from other sources we have held the latter to be another name of Mīna Pā. There are even others who opine that Matsyaghaṇa was another name of Lui Pā, and that Lui Pā, and not Mīna Pā, was the author of the *Kaula Jnāna Nirṇay*. Pandit Rāhul says of Mīna Pā: "Kāmarūp Āsām deśme machuākā kulme janma huā thā. In-bi-ke putra Mocchendrā the jinkā sisya Gorakṣa nāth whe. Pahile Lauhitya nadime macli mārte the āwar dhyān mārgme calte the. Piche Carpati Pāke sisya whe the. In-kā ek grantha Tanjurme miltā he jinkā nām hway 'Vahyāntara-Vodhi-chitta-Vandhopades' jokki puraṇi Āsāmi bā Magahi-me thā."

Mm Haraprasad gives specimen of only a few songs composed by Mīnanāth. One of his songs also quoted by Rāhul, runs thus:

"Kahanti Guru paramārthar bāt;  
Karma kuranga samādhika pāt.  
Kamala vikasila kahila na jamarā;  
Kamala madhu piwibi dhoke na bhamarā."

"The Guru mentions the way to religion (Paramārtha).....The lotus blossoms, but they cannot say....The black bees drink the honey of the lotus." Here also we find such Assamese words as "bāt" (path) "bhamarā" (Sans. and Ben. Bhramar, black-bees) etc.

**HISTORICAL CONNEXIONS:** It is interesting to note in this connexion that the famous ballads of Gorakṣa Vijay, Gopīcandra, Mānik-candra and Maināmatī, prevalent in old Kāmarūpa, in the districts now included in North Bengal, and mainly in the Rungpur district, are originally based on the history of Mīnanath, who in an undeveloped stage of his spiritual progress, fell into the snares of women in Kadali, now identified with the Kandali Mouza in the district of Nagāo, Asam. His great disciple Gorokṣanāth then came to his rescue, and by the way initiated



Maināmātī, the widowed wife of king Māṇik Candra, whose kingdom is now identified with Kamatāpur to the east of the Karatoyā, and who died leaving his son Gopīcandra, a minor. Maināmātī's elder sister, Vanamālā, was the queen of Dharmapāl who came to the throne of Kāmarūpa in about 1100 and wanted to annex Kamatāpur to his own kingdom. It resulted in a fierce battle between his army and that of Queen Maināmātī on the banks of the Tistā, and Dharmapāla being utterly defeated turned to be a mendicant (Ratneswar Mahanta's article *Mānarwatī* in *Jonāki*).

The Tibetan work *Pag-Som-Zon-Zan* of Sumpakhan Pā mentions that Siddha Hāḍi Pā (Balapāda) was buried alive by king Gopīcandra, and was restored to life by his disciple Kānpā (Kṛṣṇācāryya), after twelve years, who prevailed on Gopīcandra to become a mendicant, on his way to Kadali. This kingdom is described as Nāri Rājya, and was connected with the Kingdom of Jayantiā, the people of which still retain the matriarchal system like the Khāsis of the adjacent hills. All the places as Dabakā, Lankāpuri, Oddiān, Patan, Bakultolā and Vijaynagar have now been fully identified near about the historic kingdom of Kadali in the district of Nagāo, Asam.

**VAJRAYAN DISCIPLES:** Like Siddhācāryya Tistipād, Kilapād is known to be another disciple and descendant of the family of Lui and may therefore be safely regarded as another Kāmarupī poet. The work *Dohācārya Gītika Dṛṣṭi* is attributed to him. Kānpā (Kṛṣṇācāryya, Kṛṣṇavajra, Kṛṣṇapād or Kānpād) of whom also we have mentioned before, in passing, was connected with Kāmarūpa. His two works are *Kāhnu-pād-Gītikā* and *Dohākoṣ*. One of his songs is of such a purport:

"The Āgama (Tantras) and other books, as also the garlands in names of gods, are only trivial. Where the physical and vocal elements and even the mind cannot penetrate, how can you expect them to explain to you the Sahaj path. The preceptor is like his disciple; how can he bring home to you the things that are beyond the vocal path? He who speaks about it, simply moves the organ (of speech). The preceptor simply understands that his disciple is deaf. Kāhnu says the gem of Jina should be understood as the deaf explaining to the dumb."

We are told that there are yet a large number of Buddhist writers of Kāmarūpa as Ananga Vajra, the renowned scholar of Tāntric Buddhism and author of several works as *Prajño Pāya Vinicharyā Siddhi* and the *Hevajra Tantra*; and also Sahaj Yoginī Cintā, a female disciple of Darik Pā (identified with king Indrapal of Kāmarūpa) and author of the well-known work *Vyakta Bhabānugatā Taṭṭwā*. Siddha Tārānāth, the Tibetan author, mentions Ananga Vajra as the son of king Gopāla of Eastern India, and we know that he was the son of king

Indrapāla who was succeeded by him about 1050. There was of course another king Gopala the founder of the Pala dynasty of Bengal of the eighth century; but it is now an established fact that the Vajrayāna siddhas never flourished earlier than the tenth or eleventh century, and thus the claim of the latter is easily refuted.

Savarpād (or Sakariswar) is the author of the Buddhist work *Vajra-Yogini-Sādhān*. According to Pandit Rāhul, Savorpād was a disciple of Saraha "*Savarpad in-ka pradhan sishya thā.*" (P.T.N., p. 188). Mm. Haraprasād, in introducing this writer, describes that Indrabhuti, a king of Orissa, preached this form of worship of Vajra Yoginis and his daughter Laukīswarī lent him a helping hand in the matter. But Indrabhuti might perhaps be no other than king Indrapala of Kāmarūpa. Three other works *Mahamudra Vajra Gīti*, *Citta Guhua Gambhīrārtha* and *Sūnyatā Dr̥ṣṭi* are ascribed to him. Pundit Rahul states that one work known as *Tattwashtaka Dr̥ṣṭi* by Indrabhuti Pā is included in the Tanjur collection.

NAGARJUNA AND OTHERS: Another Buddhist teacher, Nāgārjuna, is known to have belonged to Kāmarūpa, where he is still remembered and spoken of, specially for an Ayurvedic medicine associated with his name, if not for his Buddhist learning. Haraprasād Śāstri would place him in the second century A.D. or even one century earlier quoting the authority of Alberuni, and saying that there were perhaps more than one Nāgārjuna; and in the dense forest about the Chandragarh hills of Nepal there yet exists a cave renowned as Nagarjuna Guhā. But Pundit Rahul calls him a disciple of Saraha—"Kai Tāntric Nāgārjun bhi-in-kā siṣya thā." (P.T.N. p. 168). As such Nāgārjuna, the Buddhist Tāntric, could never belong to such an early period as second century A.D.

One song by Dhen-dhena Pā (B.G.O.D., p. 51) runs as :

"Tālat mor ghar nāhi paraveṣhi:  
Hārhit bhāt nāhi niti āvesi.  
Venga Samsār barhil jāō.  
Duhila dudhu ki vente samāya.  
Balada biaela gaviā bajhe;  
Pitā duhie etinā Sājhe.  
Jano budhi go dhani budhi.  
Jo go chaurasoi sādhi.  
Nite nite shiālā shiha shama jujhaa.  
Dhendhena pāera gīta virale bujhaa."

What may strike one most, in this particular song, for example, is its resemblance with Assamese. Besides the morphological affinities as the ablative -ta- e.g. tālat, hārhit etc. and Assamese vocabulary 'mor ghar' (my house), 'šiāl' (Sans. Śrigāl, jackal), 'sāmāi' (enters) etc., excluding the common words 'balad' (bullock) and 'bhāt' (boiled rice), the

phonological import involved in the spellings of "śāmāi", "siāl", "śiha" "śāma" etc., is remarkable. Besides proving the opposite of Magadhi influence which has only ś for š. ś and s, its using of ś for ś; ś and s shows that Assamese peculiarity in pronunciation about which Sunitikumar Chatterji says: "It seems that certain forms of O.I.A., the X sound was the actually one employed for 'sh' being the nearest M.I.A. approximation to the traditional X....The change of initial, intervocal and final s to the guttural spirant (X) in Assamese is something remarkable and is paralleled by what we see in Sinhalese and Kashmiri.... This is also noticeable in Iranian, Hellenic and Celtic." (O.D.B.L.).

The other song (B.G.O.D., p. 73) is by Bhusuka Pā, who according to Pundit Rāhul, is a Rajkumar from Nalanda (P.T.N., pp. 148-54):

Baja nāba pārhi pauā khāle bāhiu.  
Aḍa abangāle klesa lurhiu.  
Āji Bhusu Bangāli bhaili.  
Nia gharini chandāli leli.  
Dahi jo pancha dhata nai dibi samjna nathā.  
Na janāmi chia kahin gāi paithā.  
Sona tarua mor kimpī na thākiu.  
Nio paribare mahā suhe thākiu.  
Chaukorhi bhandāra mor laiā sesa;  
Jivante maile nāhi viśesha."

Here besides such Assamese forms of words as āji (today), gharini (wife), mor (mine), lai (taking), and such negative prefixes as in 'nathākiu', the phonology of the words Bangāli, Abangāli, is very striking, viz., the Assamese shortening of an anterior ā before a following -ā- in the next or succeeding syllable.

The language of another song (B.G.O.D., p. 45) of Lui Pā may also be considered here :

"Bhāva nohoi abhāva no jāi.  
Āisa sambohe ko patiāi.  
Lui bhanai bata dunak-kha binānā.  
Tia dhae binasai uh lage nā.  
Jaher vana chihna ruba na jāni.  
So kaise Āgama Veda bakhāni.  
Kahere kisha bhani mai diba pirichchhā.  
Udaka chāndā jima sācha no michhā.  
Lui bhanai bhāiba kish;  
Jānai achchhama tā hera uha na dis."

In this song of Lui Pā we have such words in common with Assamese as "patiāi" (trusts, believes), "bakhāni" (explaining), "sāc" (Asm. sacā, true), "micchā" (Asm. michā, false), "mai" (I) etc. and such morphological similarities as "nāhoi" (Asm. nahai, not happens), "nājāi" (E. Asm. nājāi; mod. Asm. nājāi, does not go), and so forth. All these facts leave us in little doubt that Assamese played a big role in the composition of the Buddhist songs.

**MYSTICISM AND SYMBOLISM:** Chronology and history, philosophy and literary beauty of the Caryapadas have been dwelt on by Hindi scholars like Rahul Sankrityayana (*Puratatva Nivandhavalī*), Maithili scholars like Jayakanta Mishra (*History of Maithili Literature*), and Bengali scholars like Shahidullah (*Buddhist Mystic Songs*) among others. It is only left for the historian of Asamiyā literature to ascertain their place in it. These forty six *dohas* now extant are the compositions of poets of half that number about half a dozen of them being claimed as hailing from ancient Asam. A slight change in the archaism of most of these *dohas* could easily be made to pass for old Asamiyā poems pure and simple. They already contain a fair percentage of non-Tatsama, even non-Tadbhava indigenous Asamiyā words still quite in vogue in colloquial Asamiyā and yet rare even in the Vaiṣṇavite literature wedded to the language of the people. Just to attempt a few illustrations:—

1. Luipādānām: Kāā taruvara pancavi dāl:  
Cancala ciē paitho kāl.

Asamiyā rendering: Kāiā taruvara pancatā dāl:  
Cancala cite pašile kāl.

22. Sarahapādānām: Āpane raci raci bhava nirvāna:  
Miche loa bandhābae āpanā.

Asamiyā rendering: Āpani raci raci bhava nirvāna(k):  
Michāi loke bāndhiba āponā(k).

45. Kāhnupādānām: Man taru panca indri tasu śāhā.  
Āsā bahal pāt phal bāhā.

Asamiyā rendering: Man taru panca indri(ya) tār śākhā:  
Āsā bahal pāt phal bāsa(nā).

No less noteworthy is the form of these *dohas*; with rhyming metres depending on number of syllables, and not on accents, they definitely anticipate subsequent forms of *pada* or *payārs* in Asamiyā and Bengali, for instance. Restrained in expression, compact in ideas, and measured in length almost like sonnets, the *caryapadas*, on the other side, anticipate the Bargits about seven centuries later with fixed Rāgas, and no Rāginīs, in both, their religious philosophies apart.

Total extinction of desires and complete annihilation of 'self' which Nirvana connotes, and which can be achieved only through the preceptors of the Sahajayāna sect of Buddhism, is the main message conveyed through almost all the *dohas*. But how beautifully! Philosophy and poetry that are generally held to go ill together, are not only wedded here, but poetry fully succeeds in melting the philosophical truths so that they flow like icebergs, on the streams of poetry, as in the advent of summer. The mysticism or symbolism of just a few *caryapadas* may be presented as illustration.

"Thou fisher-woman, thou hast thy abode in the outskirts of the city. Thou touchest the Brahman, puffed up with the pride of his scriptural knowledge, as thou goest. O Fisher-woman, I must marry thee. Me, who am Kanu, a Yogi, a Kāpālīka, nude and dead to all sense of loathing. There is one lotus with sixty four petals. O Fisher-woman, let me enquire of you honestly; pray tell me whose boat it is by which you come and go. There is the guitar of *avidyā* in the scaffold of the world, and thou, Fisher-woman, hast to deal with it. For thy sake have I deserted this box in the shape of the world, containing the fancy-dress of the dancer. O Fisher-woman, I am a Kāpālīka as worthy of thee. For thy sake I have put on the garland made of bones (of dead bodies). O Fisher-woman, thou devourest the lotus sticks damaging the lake of (human) body. O Fisher-woman, will I take thy life, kill thee". (Carya 10, Kāhnupādānām).

The symbolism is marvellous, though not so simple. *Nirvāṇa* is not perceived by the senses, hence untouchable; whence it is compared to a fisher-woman. It is beyond the pale of forms, whence it is said to reside outside the city. Non-Sahajyān scholars may have ideas about *Nirvāṇa*, but they cannot attain it. Springing out of this material universe centres round the idea of a lotus with sixty-four petals (*Padmekam nirmāṇacakram catuṣṣaṣṭhi-dalayuktam*); and *Nirvāṇa* stands above it.

Again, "The sun is the gourd, and the moon is attached as the string; in between them is the stick of *avadhuti* never touching. Hark, the sweetly sad tune of the lost lute, O female friend, Nairātmā (*Nirvāṇa*). The two voices of *ālī* and *kālī* resound like *sā* and *rhi*, and the great elephant is enamoured of the music. Come near and see how the thirty two strings are pervaded. Vajradhara (*Viṇāpāda*) dances (while) the goddess (Nairātmikā or *Nirvāṇa*) sings; and so Buddha's drama of *Nirvāṇa* concludes". (Carya 17. *Viṇāpādānām*).

The symbolism here is a little more complex. With the left nostril is connected the vein or artery called *lalanā* having the characteristics of the moon or receiver; with the right nostril the vein or artery *rasanā* having the virtue of the sun or the received; (in between the two is the vein *avadhuti*, neither receiving nor being received, whence styled as untouchable). These two veins or arteries are also called *ālī* and *kālī*; and they are thirty-two in number. When *avadhuti* sings (and the poet dances) all the veins or arteries became attuned to it, and the great elephant (the Mind), is spell-bound.

"The festival drums resound in the air, for Kānu (*Kṛṣṇa Vajra*) is out to marry the fisher-woman. I shall put a stop to rebirth by marrying her, and shall win *Nirvāṇa* as a dowry. My day and nights will pass in constant intercourse, and there will be dawn by the splendour of the bride." (Carya 19. *Kṛṣṇa (Vajra) pādānām*).

**BUDDHISTIC INFLUENCE:** Yuan Chwang wrote about the religious conditions of this country in the early seventh century: "They (people of Kāmarūpa) adhere and sacrifice to the Devas and have

no faith in Buddha. Hence from the time Buddha appeared in the world even down to the present day, there never as yet has been built one sangha.....as a place for the priests to assemble. Such disciples as there are of a pure faith, say their prayers secretly and that is all. There are abundant Deva temples and different sectaries to the number of several myriads" (Beal's *Buddhist Records of the Western World*, Vol. III, p. 195). This gives a mistaken idea to the laity that Kāmarūpa had always remained divorced from Buddhist influence, or that Buddhism never penetrated into this country at all. Far from it. What this famous Chinese pilgrim said was certainly true, but true of his time only. In fact, post-seventh-century Assam became really a hot bed of various Buddhist sects, responded eloquently and contributed sumptuously to literature directly or indirectly; when modern languages of India had their rise from this apabhraṃśa dialect.

Though the progress of the different Buddhist sects was apparently stopped by the gradual propagation of Neo-Vaiṣṇavism in Asam, they really lingered though in disguise and secrecy, longer than one can possibly suppose. Undoubtedly they survived even in the hey-day of Śaṅkardew's fame earning disreputation from the Vaiṣṇavite reformers, Śaṅkardew and Mādhawadew themselves, and having reproachful references from Vaiṣṇavite biographers as alluring such Vaiṣṇava leaders as Vaṃśīgopāl, Nārāyaṇ Thākur and Gopāl Ātā in their early days.

One must not be surprised even if this influence of these Buddhist sects continued beyond the Vaiṣṇavite period, and right up to the recent times. It seems apparent in the secret religious sect well-known as the Rāti-Khowās or the Night-Worshippers. They are also known as Purna-Dhariās, the worshippers of the Complete One, or Bar Kheliās, the members of the great sect (*Kāmarūpa Anusandhān Samiti Report*, for 1916-17, *The Night Worshippers*, p. 36). They use, or rather abuse, the names of Śaṅkardew and Mādhawadew apparently meaning the affiliation of this secret sect to Neo-Vaiṣṇavism which it can really never legitimately claim. The laity keep themselves at a respectable distance from these people when they are known as such and "hold in a mysterious terror". They are usually known as night-revellers whose motto is supposed to be "Eat drink and be merry". They have their secret meetings in the late hours at night and any non-member of the sect joining them on any pretext is very seriously dealt with. In the meetings the members of the secret sect are often said to be invariably served by women naked. But they observe outer social customs as average people and are careful that they are not suspected to be members of such sects.

DEHBICARAR GĪT: Directly or indirectly, the songs known as Deh Vicārār Gīt (songs of Investigation of the Body), showing an affiliation to Vaiṣṇavism by their direct dedication to Nām Dharma, seem to echo the sentiments of the Buddhist songs, here and there. One such song runs thus. (Neog's collection '*Bhogjanā*', 1928, first edition, pp. 64-65).

"Sār karā Hari-Nāmar mālā:  
 Fuliche kamalā ful, gunjare bhomorā". (chorus)  
 Ruā dilā kāmī dilā mārālire jōtā;  
 Dui khan chāl tuli thailā ekejuri khutā.  
 Dui chāl tuli Hari lag lagāi thailā:  
 Mājat mārālī diā dui chāl chiāilā.  
 Caturdike beri ghar karālā āndhār:  
 Ardhe urdhe lagāi dilā naukhāni duār.  
 Naukhān duāre thailā nautā duari;  
 Mājat basiā raila Purnānanda Hari.  
 Dui caku dui kāṇ dui nāk lekhā:  
 Mukh same oparat sāt khān dekhā.  
 Guhya linga ei dui nimna bhāge coā:  
 Ei nau khāni duār gaṇi-piti loā.  
 Ekjani kanyā āche gharar gharini;  
 Tāk jeye pāba dekhā whe mahāmuni.  
 Ek got nadi āche bay tikṣṇa dhāre:  
 Kāl-vikāl pakhi duti ipāre sipāre.  
 Kājal barāṇ pakhi duti hengul barāṇ pākhi:  
 Kon deṣe gaal pakhi nāi dekhā dekhi.  
 Kahay Mādhawa dāse ei tattwa sār:  
 Ei bāre sāṅg haal dehar vicār".

"Take the garland of the Name of God as of the most vital importance. The lotus bud is blossoming and the black-bee is humming (chorus). You have given the rafter and split bamboos tied to the long horizontal bar, and have thus raised the two roofs on the same pair of posts. You have connected the two raised roofs tied with the long horizontal bar and have thatched them. The house was walled on four sides and made dark, and as many as nine doors were applied above and below. Nine door-keepers were employed for the nine doors and in the centre sat God who is Perfect Joy. Two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, and the mouth, these are the seven doors above, and the two private doors below; find the nine doors all right. There is one Giri who is the housewife, and one who can have a sight of her becomes a great Saint. There is one river that flows with a keen blade, and there are two birds Kāl and Vikāl (the Infinite and the Finite?) one on each bank. The two birds are of the colliseum and their wings of the vermilion colours; there is no sight or knowledge of their whereabouts. His servant Mādhawa says that this is the essence of all theories, and here ends the Investigation of the Body'. Needless to say that like Vyāsa of India, any writer without fame behind him would pass himself off as Mādhawa, the great follower of Śaṅkardew,



**TOKARI NAM:** Besides the Songs of Investigation of the Body, there are songs known as Tokāri Nām (Guitar song) sung by ascetics known as Barāgis, in accompaniment of a guitar. Such songs generally include very highly spiritual and mystic ideas, sometimes like songs of the Investigation of the Body and are highly poetic.

"Cāndo mai nicino	Surujo nicino	Nicino saragar tarā:
Āponār śarirak	āpuni nicino,	Hai achō jiwante marā.
Cāndo bitaliā	Suruj bitaliā	Āru bitaliā caku:
Cakure bhitarat	maṇi bitaliā	Ciniba noārō eko".

"I do not recognise the Moon, I do not recognise the Sun, nor do I recognise the stars of heaven. I do not recognise my own Body, and so I am dead though apparently living. The Moon is treacherous, the Sun is treacherous and treacherous are the eyes. Still treacherous are the pupils in the eyes, and I cannot recognise anything".

Another Tokāri Nām delineates the origin of the Tokāri (Guitar) with an analogy of the Body.

"Yetiā birikhe	dupāti melile	Talalai melile śiā:
Sei jupi gachake	khoje Mahādewe	Tokāri sajōgai diā.
Gacho kumaliā	pāto ciraliā	Mānik bhari bhari lāge:
Ful nau sarōte	gutiti sarile,	E kathā bujiba kone?...

Mahādew Gosāye tokāri sājile bāte Pārevati gunā.  
Irā Pingalā madhye Susumnā eino timi-gachi gunā.....

'When the tree issued two leaves and stretched forth its roots downwards, Mahādew demanded that tree to make a guitar. The tree was young and the leaves narrow and long, and it was loaded with gems in shape of fruits. The fruits dropped down before the flowers did and who would understand this?....God Mahādew made the Guitar and Pārvati made the strings; and the three strings are the Irā, Pingalā and Susumnā (the three principal arteries passing from the heart to the crown of the head)....

The Tibetan works *Grub to'b* and *bka'zabs bdum* mention Siddha Mīnanātha as a fisherman hailing from the eastern country of Kāmarūpa (Asam), as referred to by Dr. Giuseppa Tucci. This is confirmed by another scholar, Tārānath. Four lines of Minanath's verse are grafted into the Sanskrit commentary of Caryā 21; they are also quoted by Rāhul Saṅkrītyāyana:

"Kahanta Guru paramārthar bāt;  
Karma Kuranga samādhika pāt.  
Kamala vikasila kahila na jamarā:  
Kamala madhu piwibi dhoka na bhamarā".



Strangely, these last two lines are re-echoed in the second line of the first Dehbičārār Gīt quoted above. Also the second Tokāri Nām repeats the analogy of the tree, just after Luipāda, "Kāā tarubara pañcā bī dāla", (c. 1.) applied to the body, and after Kāhnupāda, "Mana taru panca indi tasu sāhā" (c. 45) applied to the mind.

Direct or indirect influence of the *Caryapadas* or *dohās* thus has infiltrated into the Asamīyā society in various ways and secured affiliation of Vaiṣṇavism indirectly. The mystic and esoteric tone of the *Caryāpadas* continues right through the songs of the Rātikhowās, and the mystic tone alone pervades through and through in the songs known as Tokāri Nām. The tree analogy started by Siddhas like Saraha, Lui, Kāhnu and others, continues right up to the Guitar Songs, and the Kamal (Lotus) and Bhomorā (Black-bee), simile of Mina Pā continues right up to the songs of the Investigation of the Body. Perhaps this tone has become permanent somehow in Assamese lyrics of later times.

DAKAR VACAN: Aphorisms of Dāk are vast and varied, and even today are in vogue almost all over eastern India, mainly in Asam, Bengal and Orissa. It is sometimes challenged whether there was actually a person named Dāk (Dr. Md. Sahidullah's *Pūrva Maymen singha Sāhitya Sammilani's Presidential Address*, 1345 B.E. p. 11), and it is further called in question whether we have any genuine specimen of the aphorisms.

Scholars like Kanaklal Baruwa maintain that the words Dāk and Khanā may better be regarded as titles than as proper names, being derived from the Tibetan words Gdag and Mkhan, signifying a wise man and a learned woman respectively. Dāk must not also be mistaken for a masculine form of Dākinī (a witch), and the above facts may not be cited to prove that a historical person of the name of Dāk could not exist (*J.A.R.S.*, Vol. VI, Nos. 3 and 4, pp. 82-83).

The Dāk Carit or Dāk Bhanitā prevalent in Asam supplies sufficient data as to the parentage and early life of Dāk. His father was a potter and had seven brothers. Aphorisms in vogue in Bengal seem to refer to him as a milkwoman's son, e.g. "Fut bhāshe Dāk Goāle", perhaps comparing him with Kṛṣṇa who was brought up among milkmen and milk-maids. "Lehidangarā Dākar Gāo", says *Dāk carit*. There is yet a village of the name of Lehi, still known as the village of Dāk, six or seven miles to the south of the Barpeta town, in the Kāmrup district. The aphorisms also refer to three hundred and sixty tanks full of boats in the village in which Dāk was born. Definite traces of these tanks are said to have been lost when the village was almost des-

troyed by the great earthquake in Asam in 1897; but even as it is, it may not yet be difficult to feel that it was a potter's village long time ago. "Edin āsiā Mihira Muni: Atithi svarūpe railā āpuni". Thus legends connect the life of Dāk with that of the great Indian astronomer, Barāh Mihira of Navaratna fame. It is said that this great astronomer, happened one evening to call at this potter's house, perhaps on his pilgrimage to Kāmarūpa of Purāṇic fame.

**BUDDHISTIC SUGGESTION:** The outstanding fact about all such traditions seems to be that Dāk was a junior contemporary of Mihir and may therefore be placed about the sixth century. His aphorisms were certainly not recorded as soon as they were given out, but were transmitted orally for generations from father to son. No manuscript of these sayings dates earlier than the eighteenth century. Their spirit also seems to be modified here and there by the ages succeeding. Despite all these odds, the Buddhist influence in them seem unmistakable, though attempts were not spared to Hinduise them.

The chapter on Discourse on Religion (Dharma Prakaraṇ), even as we find it today, records:

"Yevese Dharmak karibā jāni:  
Pukhuri khāniā rākhāibā pānī.  
Brikṣa ropanat adhik Dharma:  
Matha-Mandap gurutar karma."  
"Yei diye tāke pāi: Paraloke sukhe khāi.  
Anitya dehat nāhi āś: Dhan janat ki biswās."

'If you would achieve virtues, then keep water by digging tanks. More virtues are acquired by planting trees; and building etc. of monasteries are worthier deeds'. 'Whatever is given (in this world) is received (in the other), and is enjoyed with happiness in the next life. No hope can be cherished for this body which is ephemeral, and no trust should be reposed on money and men (near and dear ones)'. The same idea further continues:—

Yei diye annar sārī: Sijan nājai Yam nagari.  
Anna jal adhik dān: Tāta kari śreṣṭha nāhi ān.  
Dadhi dugdha diyā bipul: Oushadh dānat nāhike tul.  
Dāke bole jānā sehise sār: Āpuni marile ki kare ār.

'He who gives food will never have to go to the region of Yama. Giving of food and water is such a great virtue that no other virtue can supersede it. Sufficient milk and curd should be given; giving of medicine is a virtue that knows no parallel. Dāk declares that this is the essence (of religion); nothing can issue once you die.'

**EAST-INDIA VOGUE:** This doctrine of doing good to others, combined with a stressing on what is here and now, can surely be nothing

short of a Buddhist principle. The sayings of Dāk have a tremendous hold over the people still, and may rightly be regarded as the Vedas of the mass and such lines as "Dākar vachan Vedar vāṇī" are actually a challenge rather than showing affiliation to the Vedic religion.

Prevalence of the sayings of Dāk in Bengal and Orissa is another matter calling for some attention. Dāk has been called the "Socrates of Bengal" by a historian of Bengali literature and this comparison is of course a happy one; because like Socrates, Dāk was born at a time when like the very room where he was born it was dark all around. And a star like Dāk would naturally throw its beams far indeed. Secondly, as we have already noticed, linguistically and culturally this whole of eastern India, including the modern states of Asam, Bengal Bihar and Orissa formed practically one cultural unit, and a genius of any one part of it could reasonably be claimed by another.

For comparison was gathered one Bengali version, 'Dak Purusher Vachan' (published by Beni Madhav De & Co., B.E. 1335), evidently an incomplete collection. No Oriya collection being available, we shall quote one of them from Dr. Shahidullah's *Purva Maymensingha Sahitya Sammilani Address*.

Asamiyā:	Nijar pukhuri dūrak jāi	Parak āsāre bātak cai.
	Pānik pelāi pānik jāi:	Dāke bole tāik nidibā thāi.
Bengali:	Niyar pokhari dūre jāi	Par sambhāshe bāte thihe.
	Pānī feliā pānike jāi.....	Tāre na balihe sāti.
Oriya:	Niyar pokhari durhe jāe	Para sambhāshe bāte thihe.
	Dake bole e nari ghare natike	

The literal translation of the original lines is,—“The woman who, leaving (her) own tank, goes far..... (and) sees the path (or waits) in hope of another, and throws away water (and then) goes to (get) water, Dāk says, never give her shelter.”

The above quotations show one and the same original saying varying slightly to suit the different tongues. The three words 'nijar', 'pukhuri' and 'bāt' mean in Asamiyā, old or new, 'one's own', 'tank', and 'path' respectively. Their variations in modern Bengali or Oriya still appears foreign. Hence the centre of radiation of the aphorisms must have been somewhere in Kāmarūpa, and Dāk's place of birth has perhaps been rightly located at the Lehi village in the present Barpeta subdivision of Asam.

**DIVISION INTO A DOZEN DISCOURSES:** The aphorisms of Dāk may number more than one thousand, and are divided into at least a dozen

discourses. The first Discourse on Child Birth (Janma Prakaraṇ) deals with the newborn baby and its mother. It describes not only all the methods of nursing but also dwells on the food and diet of the mother. They are most sound practical advice informing a thorough knowledge of ancient midwifery. The second is the Discourse on Religion (Dharma Prakaraṇ) dealing with acquisition of virtues. The Bengali version of a few aphorisms of this discourse gives:—

“Bhāl drabya jakhan pāba:  
Kālikāre tuliā nāthaba.  
Kālikāre bāt nācāhiye:  
Māthār opar Yam dārḥāye.  
Dadhī dugdha kariā bhog:  
Oṣadh diā khandāba rog.  
Bole Dāk ei samsār;  
Āpane maile kiser ār”.

Making allowance for just a few local variations in vocables etc. these lines appear to approach the original in spirit and form. ‘When one gets a good article of food, one should not keep it for the morrow. One must not wait for the morrow, for the God of death stands on one’s head. One should enjoy milk and curd, and remove diseases by using medicine. Dāk says, what is this world worth to one once one is no more?’

The equivalent Asamiyā aphorisms say the opposite:—

“Bhāl drabya yikṣane pāba:  
Dewatā dvijak sikṣane dība.  
Kālir bhāgāk rākhe jījane:  
Praśamse tāk Rabi Nandane”.  
“Dāke bole jānā sehise sār:  
Āpuni marile ki kare ār”.

‘The moment one gets a good article of food, one should give it to gods and Brahmins then and there. One who keeps it for the morrow is praised by (?) son of the Sun. Dak says, what is this world worth to one once one is no more?’ The above four lines then may naturally be suspected as interpolations to inculcate Brahministic doctrines either deliberately or unwittingly. This doubt seems to be confirmed by another evidence. The publisher of the Assamese Dāk Charitra or Dāk Bhanitā (Late Sivanath Bhattacharyya), frankly admits in his preface (4th edition, Dibrugarh) that he consulted several books extant as also manuscripts, but could not ascertain which is right and which is wrong. And he adds: “Nij vivecanā āru dhāraṇāre jihake thik buli jānilō, seidarei chapā karālō”. The Buddhist doctrines must be something foreign to the average mind today and moulding of them after the Brahministic doctrine may simply have

seemed the correct and right course sometimes even to honest, if uncritical, minds. This is also true of the Bengali version of some sayings.

The Bengali as well as the Assamese sayings show many instances of such interpolations giving unusual stress on bathing in the Ganges though it is so directly against the Buddhistic doctrines. They occur mainly in the Discourse on Religion and the Bengali version here is in perfect agreement with the Assamese both in matter and language. This may point to the conclusion that these interpolations took place at an early stage, before Bengali developed itself into an independent speech and perhaps about the time of the new revival of Brāhminism.

The third division is the Nīti Prakaraṇ or the Discourse on Morality mainly in regard to household affairs. 'Know ye that to be a model household where a householder can address his mother (who is alive) even in his sixtieth year', and so on. Again, 'Know ye the downfall of those households to be sure who live in a house that has leakage in the roofs, who keep grown-up girls in their houses', and so on.

The fourth division is Rāj Nīti Prakaraṇ or Discourse on Politics. It incidentally mentions what shall be the responsibilities of a king or of his subjects:—

Rājāk cinibā dānat; Ghorāk ciniba kānat.  
Khurak cinibā sānat; Tirik chiniba snānat.

'Know ye a king by his gifts, a horse by his ears, a razor in the stone that sharpens it, and a woman in bathing.'

Dhan āsā eri sudhiba sākshi:  
Rājāk teve Dharme fure rākhi.

'The king shall examine a witness without any consideration of money; then alone Religion shall protect him everywhere'.

Vaidya huyā mare āpuni biṣe:  
Nripati huyā prajāk himse.....

'A king who envies his subjects is like a physician who dies by his own poison'.

Then, fifth, is Nyāya Prakaraṇ or Discourse on Justice.  
Nyāy bujiba daś jāne; Dharmādharmā jibā jāne.  
Sākhi kariba drirha mane; Sākhir dwārāi nyāy jine.

'Those who know the difference between religion and irreligion, such ten persons will decide what is just. Make them witnesses with a resolute mind, for justice is won by (the help of) witnesses.'

"Madhyasthe jeve samādhe nyāy:  
Bole Dāke bar sukh pāi.....

Strir aparādhe swāmir daṇḍa:  
 Strir doshe swāmi landabhanda.  
 Daṇḍa Bhed Sam Dān:  
 Cāri upāye jinibā ān.

'When an arbitrator metes out justice, Dak says it is a happy thing.... A husband is punished for the fault of his wife; the husband may meet ruin for the misdeeds of the wife. Punishment, divide-and-rule, equity and gift—these are the four methods by which others are to be ruled.'

The sixth, is Vasati Prakaraṇ or Discourse on Habitation.

"Yathā Rājā pāle: Tathā vasati bhāle.  
 Rājā nāi pātāt: Dhari kilāy bātāt.  
 Jene rājā tene deś: Tāke dekhi karibā bheś".

'Habitation is safe where the king rules. Where there is no king on the throne, one may be beaten on the street. A country is after its king; and your behaviours should be after them.

The seventh Discourse is on women characteristics, good or evil.

Tik baladhā khāne māṭi: Māk bhālehe jiyek jāti.  
 Māṭi kinibā māj khāl: Choāli ānibā māk bhāl.  
 Saru dānt, lāvaṇya māt: Gharat banti sandhyā belāt.  
 Randhan karay, vacan mishta: Sei grihinik bolay iṣṭa.

'That is the (right type of) bullock that digs ground from a raised mould of earth with his horns; and that daughter is polite whose mother is decidedly good. Buy land that is lower in the middle; and marry a girl whose mother is surely good. That wife promotes welfare to the household whose teeth are small, voice soft; who lights the lamp just at dusk, cooks and addresses everyone gently.' Again,

Pingal ākhi, capal mati: Oth dāngar alakshaṇ jāti.  
 Pat, pithi, okha lalāt: Tāik dekhile erhibā bāt.  
 Bina cune guā khāi: Rāti bule git gāi.  
 Ucit bulile pāre gāli: Powe jiye hay ari.  
 Ji nari bāriye karay bāt: Yuvati hai behāi hāt.  
 Jalake pāi talake jāi: Dāke bole tāik nidibā thāi.

'Know her as inauspicious whose eyes are reddish, mind fickle and lips thick. Avoid her on the street who has her belley, back and brow high. Dāk says never give shelter to that woman who eats betel nut without lime, who sings and walks at night, who rebukes when one tells her the right thing, who is inimical with her sons and daughters, who allows a passage through her compound, and goes to market though young, and who moves about at her sweet will.'

Then eighth is the Discourse on Cooking:—

Cāul dibā jatek tatek: Pāni dibā tini tetek.  
 Yeve dekhā nisiye cāul: Teve bulibā Dākak bāul.

'Give that quantity of rice that you would, and add thrice that quantity of water. if by this proportion the rice is not boiled, then do call Dak insane....

The ninth is the Discourse on Astrology:—

'Siť sariyah 'Miť mäh: Saranat näkäte bet bäh.  
Bñäuar cari Amnar cari: Mäh baabä jimän päri....  
Aonsir pratipad Purnimar ti: Mākar gharalai näjāy ji.  
Some śani pūve bās: Duti gale eti nās'.

'Do not sow oil and pulse seeds in the lunar periods ending respectively in 'Si' (viz. in ekadasi, dwadasi, trayodasi and chaturdasi, i.e., from the eleventh to the fourteenth day after the black or the full moon), and in 'mi' (viz. in panchami, saptami, ashtami, navami and daśmi i.e. on the fifth, seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth days after the black or the full moon); and never cut cane creepers or bamboo grasses in Saran i.e. for the six days taken by the Moon to move from the Sravana to Kevati nakshatra. Sow pulse seeds as much as you can between the fourths or Bhadra and Aswina months.....On the first day after the black moon and on the third day after the full moon, even a daughter must not move to her mother's house. Even though only two persons would make a journey eastward on Monday and on Saturday, one of them is sure to meet his end'.

The tenth is Vriṣṭi Prakaraṇ Discourse on Rain:—

Māghar māsāt bariṣe pāni:  
Teve alpa briṣṭi āgalai jāni.  
Āhārar navami śukla pakṣat:  
Yadi nabaraṣe bhūmir talat:  
Hal bhunāibe chintiyō Dew;  
Rājār grihat kariyō sew.  
Ākāśāt bhāse pānir gachā:  
Prithivi burāba jānibā sacā.

'If it rains in Māgha (January-February) then you may be sure of some rain in the future (rainy season). If it does not rain on the ninth day of the bright fortnight in the moon of Aṣārha, then leave all hopes of your ploughing, think God and serve in the royal house. When you happen to see water-spout in the air, know it for certain that the earth will be drowned (by rain).'

The eleventh is the Discourse on cultivation:—

Dāke bole Bāpu śunā upāi:  
Bāñijyar fal kriṣṭ pāi....  
Sonā rūpā kibā kari:  
Bhāt nākhāle bhokate mari.  
Hirā māṇik thāke aār:  
Bhāt nahale māraṇ sār....  
Nāngal baladat savare āś:  
Yār nāi tār sakalo nās.

Jeth mās gaal binā nāngale:  
 Tār kiriṣi kimate fale.  
 Kiriṣit yadi karibā man:  
 Hāl garu rākhi karā jātan.

'Dak says, Sir, follow my advice: the fruits of commerce can be reaped even in cultivation.....of what avail can gold and silver be? For you are sure to die of starvation when there is no rice. Let there be immense diamond and gems: your death is certain without rice..... Every one has to depend on the plough and the bullock; he who has none must be doomed. (But) how would one thrive in cultivation if one passes the month of Jeth (May and June) without ploughing? If you would make cultivation then be on the alert by keeping plough and bullocks'.

Among others there is the Discourse on Miscellanies:—

- (a) Dākar bacan Vedar vāpi:  
 Po lagā boāri gharalai nāni.  
 Toko banche, moko banche:  
 Bhāl bhāl khini putekalai sānche....
- (b) Jāpi lāthi tanā: Tāk erile dinatē kaṇā.  
 Śoon, śoon, śoon: Lākhutidālar natā goon.  
 Pālā sāp pelālā māri: Nāi pirā bahilā pāri.  
 Nāi kāmāri bāndhilā bhār.  
 Hātar sakhā; pāni jokhā:  
 Śatru mitrai nāpāi lāi.  
 Si hal tomār lagar bhāi:  
 Bātar kukureo nāpāi lāi.
- (c) Siye, piye, liye: Ei tini oparat jiye.  
 Parhe, parhāi, rowe pān: Ei tiniye nicinte ān.
- (d) Kukurat māti; Garhat uthi,  
 Sāpat lāthi. Mahat par; Bāghat thar.

(a) 'Regard ye the saying of Dāk as injunctions of the Vedas: never admit a woman with a son (as a wife) into your house. She will deceive both thee and me, and reserve all that is best for her son. (b) One must be blind even in broad daylight who goes out without the umbrella, the stick and the belt. Do listen to me thrice; the stick has as many as nine virtues. You may kill off a snake as you find it; when you are in want of a seat, you can use it as such; if there is no rowing stick to cross the river you row with it. You have no stick for carrying goods on your shoulder and you have made it one. It is a friend for your hands; it measures also depths of water you have to cross; neither your friend nor your foe can challenge you; it is your fellow brother, and the street dog cannot dare approach you. (c) That sews, that drinks and that carries. these three live on others. One that reads, another that teaches, and the third that grows betel-leaf plants, should have no leisure to think of other things. (d) Apply (tricks of) hiding in (case of) elephants, lying down in boats, throwing earth in dog, climbing trees



in rhinoceroses, stick in snakes, falling in buffaloes and looking steadfastly in tigers.'

**A VYASA OF THE UNLETTERED:** The tremendous influence which these sayings exercise over the mass people of Asam in particular, and Eastern India in general, can better be felt than described. Nay, they are really the *Vox populi* or the voice of the people and hence the voice of God. They rightly challenge the Vedas in their hold on the mass people. They are certainly the accumulated wisdom of ages showing 'the wisdom of many and the wit of one'. In this respect Dāk may really be styled as a Vyāsa of the unlettered. Nothing that can be said about the conduct of their daily life has been left unsaid. They include the alpha and omega of their knowledge.

Besides the reference given above to the connection of Dāk with Barāh Mihir mention of the latter is also found in some sayings of Dāk:—

Chaubis baladhā shola chāgal:  
Parhi śuni Barāh pāgal.

Janma lagna yātrā jorā: Barāh Mihire nāpāi orā.

So the story of Dāk's birth together with such references may confirm the conclusion that Dāk was a contemporary of Barāh Mihir of Nawa-ratna fame and may have lived some time about the fifth century. This seems indirectly further corroborated by the Buddhist influence on these sayings showing that they must have at any rate been composed sometime before the revival of Brāhmanism. This led some Assamese scholars to attempt to place the aphorisms of Dāk in the sixth or seventh century; but for reasons assigned in case of folk literature, we cannot place them before the eighth century; for they share many things in common with the folk-literature, being oral and being also an expression of popular thoughts and feelings. Also for absorbing Buddhist influence, aphorisms of Dāk must be later than the Caryas.

**ASSAMESE PROVERBS** present probably the earliest specimen of Assamese metrical composition. Something like the English alliterative poetry of the Anglo Saxon period, it was found in Virgil that there was a tendency in the sound of the last syllable of the last word of a line to agree with the last syllable of a word in the middle of the same line. The Leonian metre discovered by monk Leonidus and used in his verse rendering of the Old Testament appears to have developed from this tendency of repeating the same sound and bringing these corresponding sounds gradually from the middle to the end of each line with promi-

nence of consonantal sounds. Traces of such early stages of metre is still seen in some Assamese proverbs:—

- “Kāurī tengar; ne māurī tengar.”  
 “Māk marā māurā: bāpek marā kōwar.”  
 “Kino pai hutāi tāt: loṇ sānibalai tat nāpāi.”  
 “Gharar burhā: pathārar murhā.”  
 “Dāi nāi dewaliā: tiri nāi kewaliā.”  
 “Yetekate nātiche: tetakate fātiche.”

Rhyme in language is an outer expression in literature of the inner rhythm of the soul as shown in the rhythmic beating of every heart and pulse. It is as it were the eternal harmony pervading the universe and vibrating through every human heart. It appears why every rhythmic movement and every rhythmic sound are so dear to us. It is probably exactly why poetry is earlier and dearer for ever. The onomatopoeic Assamese words representing the sounds of gentle breeze, brook and the cuckoo, namely, rib-rib, kul-kul, ku--u respectively are themselves poetic enough, and advance a step towards rhyming by itself. So, no wonder, like alliteration, onomatopoeic words and Leonian metre, Assamese proverbs showed the first step towards the old Assamese metres, later on systematised and classified into *pad*, *dulari*, *lecāri*, *Chabi*, *jhunā* and *Kusum-mālā*. Probably also the aphorisms of Dāk formed the immediately next step. So the proverbs may be the cradle of Assamese prosody.

The Assamese proverbs, like proverbs in general, may be summed up in one sentence of Russel, namely, “The wisdom of many and the wit of one”. This may be illustrated by such proverbs as:—“Bangahe mangah khāy: Bangah nahale mangah pelani yāy.” (Family relations eat flesh of one another; without family relations their flesh is wasted). “Lāgani nahale jui najvale: Tuṭakīā nahale gāo nabahe”. (No fire can be kindled without a dry fuel; no village can multiply unless there be persons poisoning ears of one another), and so forth. Some of the proverbs are characterised by what may be called “pungent criticism of life”. This is illustrated by such Assamese proverbs:—

- Dukhīai kathā kay: kathāt nidiye kāṇ:  
 Cahakīye kathā kay: gākhīre gure sān.

‘The poor speak; none care. The rich speak; it tastes like milk and molasses mixed together. Again “Cahāi behā śikile: rātike din yen dekhile.” The farmer learns trade; the night appears to him like the day’. Also “Bāmune śagune bicāre marā: Gaṇake bicāre nariā parā.” ‘The Brahman and the vulture are after dead bodies: the astrologers after the bed-ridden’.

Āgat etā pāchat etā hale akale yāba pāri:

Gākhīre gure hale śudāie khāba pāri.

'One can go all alone with one ahead and another behind; one can take meal without any sauce if only milk and molasses are supplied'.

The proverbs as a whole, as they reflect the Assamese social life, betray a primitive agricultural civilisation which Assam as a part of India enjoyed. It is mainly expressed in its simile and other figures of speech: "Māche garakā pācali khābā: Śāhue garakā boārī bābā. 'Enjoy that curry which is boiled with fish. Be served by a daughter-in-law who has served a mother-in-law.' There may of course be some proverbs which will appear to be vulgar in meaning or to have some slang words in them. This can perhaps be said of proverbs in all languages of the world, like the English, for example: showing that they originated at a time when such differences of the vulgar and educated did not come into existence or when the standard of taste for all classes of people were one and the same. A collection of best and selected proverbs numbering nearly two thousand (Neog's *Rahrahi*, the prize book of the Asam Sāhitya Sabhā, 1937) show literary excellence of high order and may be called a treasure-house of Assamese literature by itself. Most of them seem untranslatable because of their intensely colloquial simile in the genius of the language.

**RHYTHM, ACCENT, ALLITERATION:** These aphorisms perhaps share in common with the proverbs, with which they more often than not are intermingled, that claim for the early stage of modern rhyming metres through possibly, alliterative words, depending on accents as in Anglo-saxon poetry depending on number of syllables. "Kino pai hutāi-tāi; Loṇ sānibalai tat nāpāi", the word "hutai-tai" seem to have some alliterative or even onomatopoeic sound with musical effect invariably that might originally be responsible for inducing rhymed couplets of small groups of words, as quoted in connection with the Discourses on Miscellany (b), (c), (d) in particular. In rhythm man seems to regain his lost paradise. It is inherent in him as the heart-beats themselves. So the onomatopoeic sounds, as of the cuckoo (koo-koo-), of the brook (kul-kul), of the leaves (khil-khil) and of the breeze (rib-rib), are so soothing to the ear. This makes us inclined to believe that this alliterative character of the proverbs and aphorisms and onomatopoeic words were the cradle of modern vernacular metres, and in these sayings of Dāk in crude verse possibly we find various forms which might give rise to them as pad, dulari, jhunā, kusummālā and others.

'Brevity is the soul of wit' and we find no better instances of it than these sayings. In fact these have given rise to a literary style, terse and pregnant with meaning, called aphoristic. It may suffice to say

that the language of these aphorisms have a literary beauty quite their own. They are too economic in their use of words, because they are at once practical. They have a terseness that sometimes make the aphorisms verge on riddles, being so compact in meaning. Their control of words seem to make them verge on obscurity of thought, but only to those who are not trained in them. But this is exactly what constitutes the charm of the aphorisms, which perhaps were thousands in number. The conditions of society which favoured their growth at one time are now perfectly things of the past. Even as a monument of the past, here is a pillar of Assamese culture of the earlier society.

#### IV. ŚAKTA POETRY AND SONGS OF ŚAKTA INFLUENCE

THE ŚAKTA ATMOSPHERE: "At this time (about the fifteenth century) Śāktism was the predominant form of Hinduism in this part of India, where in fact it is believed by many to have had its origin. Its adherents base their observances on the Tantras, a series of religious works in which the various ceremonies, prayers and incantations are prescribed in a dialogue between Siva and his wife Parbatī. The fundamental idea is the worship of the female principle, the procreative power of nature as manifested by personified desire. It is a religion of bloody sacrifices from which even human beings were not exempt. In the Kalika Purāṇ it is stated that a man without blemish is the most acceptable sacrifice that can be offered, and the manner in which the victim is to be dealt with is laid down in great detail". (Gait's *H.A., R.E.*, p. 58).

Even by the time when the Tāi (Āhom) invaders entered Assam in the early thirteenth century, the ruling classes here, the Bāra-Bhūyās and the Chutiyās, for example, Aryans and non-Aryans, were all found to be staunch devotees of Śakti; and it is not in the least unlikely that it is from some such non-Aryan races that this form of worship was borrowed.

"The religion of the Chutiyās was a curious one. They worshipped various forms of Kali with the aid, not of Brahmans, but of their tribal priests or Deoris. The favourite form in which they worshipped this deity was that of Kēcāi Khāti, "the eater of raw flesh" to whom human sacrifices were offered. After their subjugation by the Ahoms, the Deoris were permitted to continue their ghastly rites; but they were usually given for the purpose, criminals who had been sentenced to capital punishment. Failing them victims were taken from a particular clan, which in return was accorded certain privileges. The person selected was fed sumptuously, until he was in sufficiently plump condition to suit the taste of the goddess, and he was then decapitated at the Copper Temple at Sadiya, or at some other shrine of the tribe. Human sacrifices were also formerly offered by the Tippera, Kachāris, Koches, Jaintiās and other Assam tribes (Human Sacrifices in Ancient Assam, *J.A.S.R.* 1898, p. 56), and it is thus easy to see how they came to be regarded favourably by the Tantric sect of Hinduism which is said to have had its origin in this corner of India." (Gait's *H.A., R.E.*, p. 42).

**BAUDDHA TANTRIC CONTRIBUTION:** Besides this apparent non-Aryan origin, there appears to be some direct influence of certain later Buddhist sects as Mahā Yān, Hin Yān, Vajra Yān or more probably of Bauddha Sahajīā and Bauddha Tāntrics. That this is quite probable, and even likely, is proved by the influence of Buddhism on Bengal Vaiṣṇavism:

"The Sahajia cult owed its origin to the rituals in which young and beautiful women were required to be loved and worshipped". "In the Sahajia creed of the Vaiṣṇavas the old doctrine (of the Vāmāchāri Buddhists) reappear among the masses, and its great exponent Chandidas echoed the sentiments of Kānubhatta in his love-songs from giving a higher spiritual tone than they had ever received from the Buddhists". (D.C. Sen's *H.B.L.*, p. 37). "The Buddhist Bhikshus and Bhikshunis (monks and nuns) probably started the principles of salvation by sexual love". "This cult of Buddhist monks found favour in the lower stratum of Vaiṣṇava society, the degeneracy of which was mainly brought about by the immoral latitude of the Sahajia Vaiṣṇavas. The epithet (Nerha-Nerhi) is now applied to the fallen men and women of the Vaiṣṇava society....The Vaiṣṇavas who borrowed the Sahajia cult from the Buddhists were not spared these nicknames". (*Ibid.*, pp. 45-46). It may be mentioned in passing that the faith of the Rāti-khowās or Night-worshippers appears to be something akin to it, but despite their attempts to pass for Vaiṣṇavas, they have no affiliation to Asam Vaiṣṇavas in any way.

That both the Aryan and non-Aryan forms of Tantric worship were prevalent in Kāmarūpa side by side till at least the reign of king Nara Narayan (1540-84) is apparent from the Darang Raj Vamsāvali, (p. 65, vs 336-37). Sir Edward Gait writes:—"when the new temple of Kāmākhyā was opened the occasion was celebrated by the immolation of no less than a hundred and forty men, whose heads were offered to the Goddess on salvers made of copper. Similar sacrifices were offered to various aboriginal deities. According to the Haft Iqlim there was in Kāmarūpa a class of persons called Bhogis, who were voluntary victims of a Goddess named Ai who dwelt in a cave; from the time when they announced that the Goddess had called them, they were treated as privileged persons; they were allowed to do whatever they liked, and every woman was at their command; but when the annual festival came round they were killed. Magic also held an important place in the estimation of the people, and in the *Ain-i Akbari*, they were accused, among other practices, of divination by the examination of a child cut out of the body of "a pregnant woman who had gone her full term of months". (*H.A.*, p. 58).

**SAIVITE INFLUENCE SUGGESTED:** A tremendous influence of Śaivism is also suggested by all the earlier copper-plates granted by the kings of Kāmarūpa, beginning from Bhāskar Varman of the early seventh century. This copper plate as also those of Harjar Varman of the early, and of Vanamal Varman of later ninth century, of Vala Varman of the early tenth century and of king Ratnapal of the eleventh

century, all begin with invocations addressed to Siva. But in one of the copper plates granted by king Indrapal in the latter half of the eleventh century, the name of Durgā finds place beside that of Śiva. In another copper plate of this very king the names of both Dharitrī (Earth) and Mahāvarāh (Viṣṇu) appear in the invocation along with the name of Siva. (*Kamarup Sasanavali*). This shows how Saivism and Saktism were in full swing and had a monopoly in religion till the twelfth century in Asam. One Kāmaratna Tantra in old Assamese (published by Government of Assam, 1928) has its original in Sanskrit. This Sanskrit work is ascribed to Goraksanath, a disciple of Minanath, and deals with all arts connected with the sexual science. Asam, with innumerable Siva temples and with Kāmākhyā Pitha at its heart even to-day is well known as a centre of phallic worship and a land of magic. It may be a message for many people that till today, the Tantras and Mantras of this province has spread as far west as Bihar and the United Provinces and the Punjab in the Assamese language. (Zemindar Nagen-dra Narayan Chaudhari's *Presidential Address* of the Assam Literary Conference, 1931).

**MYSTIC SIGNS AND SOUNDS:** The Tantras employ mystic signs and sounds. They are opposed to Vaiṣṇavite treatises in their fundamental principle, namely, that they aim at affording earthly pleasures while the Vaiṣṇavite works offer eternal bliss away from earthly pleasures which they condemn. But sometimes a Vaiṣṇavite work is also named a Tantra such as the Sātwatā Tantra, perhaps with a view to attract the attentions of Tantricians to Vaiṣṇavism. Real Tantric works not only show the path to earthly pleasures, but also give means to achieve them. *Kāmaratna Tantra*, for instance, not only prescribes antidotes against snake-bites etc., but also instructs methods by which women can be subdued and sexual pleasure best enjoyed, besides love-charms.

*Mantras* or incantations are used for charming, and are recited like songs or poems. They are sometimes employed as substitutes for medicines as in snake-bites, stomach-complaints and also in doing mischiefs to enemies. In ninety per cent cases these mantras are known to prove very efficacious. They are overwhelming in number and much varied in character. But they have not been published save some general mantras in forms of *Brahma Karatī*, *Pānī Karatī* etc., mainly for professional reasons. Their language is comparatively a little more archaic than most of the other forms of our early literature, and this professional conservation or trade-secrecy may be held responsible for it.

*Mantras* in general bear no name of their authors. One *mantra* which is to be written with a bright yellow pigment on the bark of the Indian birch, and to be attached to one's wrist by means of an amulet

in order that one may be victorious everywhere over all spirits: "Kring Hring Hring Kaung Drah Dah Dah Pas Pas" (formula). 'Oh goddess of Fire (Swāhā), do protect the whole body of so and so till his death from this day.' An incantation meant for subduing a woman: "The stagnant water of an unmoved tank: here sits the Queen of Kāmākhyā. The Queen of Kāmākhyā says: let so and so be caught hold of by her hair and brought here. The crest of the tiger and the bile of the deer: let me drink the love of so and so by making a cavity of the hand." Some water should be charmed with this *mantra* and then drunk in the woman's name.

**KARATIS AND PAKSIRAJ MANTRAS:** There are lots of books of incantation known as Karati puthis of different titles. Rudra Karati is one of them and starts in the following manner: "Salutation to Kṛiṣṇa. Salutation also to Ganes. The God of Eternity rests in sleep. The four Vedas have emerged out of His breath. The (fourth) Atharva Veda rushed out with a great noise. This Atharva Veda is called the Ādya (original) Karati. From it spread the Karati Mantras throughout the world. Let me employ the four Karatis in the names of Siva, Brahmā and Viṣṇu, to charm this water. God has begun to utter the *mantras* with a big sound. Karati was so named for it was born out of this big sound. God gave out a cry with a big sound: let all poison be turned (futile) to water with a big sound." So *Atharva Veda* is rightly traced to be the origin of Tantric worship.

Assamese books on spells, charms and incantation may easily number hundreds. But only a few dozen of them are available in print. Others are kept in strict secrecy by their professional owners. The most common ones that are generally found are the Karatis, the cakra karati, Pāni karati, Vāyu karati, Brahma karati, Rudra karati, Śaṅkar karati, Guru karati, Uchat karati, etc. Others are Pakshiraj Mantra, Karchani, Dhanvantari or Brihat Vaidya Sār Nidān, Bāra Bhani Bishali Mantra, Na Bhani Mantra, Sudarsan Mantra, Dharani Mantra, and there are incantations on all diseases and complaints. Many of these incantations or charms are clothed in language of unsurpassed beauty, combined with terseness, and sometimes touched with some form of mysticism.

The Pakṣi Rāj Mantra (charm of the king of Birds) runs as follows:—"Yetikshaṇ Pakṣirāj upajilā; Sāto swarga kampibāka lailā: Kampilā sāto pātāl. Brahmār sṛiṣṭit lāgil huri: Tridaśa dewe bole jāo kon puri? Kalā Varna śariir dekhante ati dar: Cakṣudvay dekhante jena agnir varan; thot gota dekhi yena hengular varṇa. Dui gota paksi ākās bheti thāke; Vajra nakhar ghāwe thara-tharī kāmpe. Yeve Pakṣirāj thiya huiyā āche; asaṁkhyā Dewak dekhila pāchhe". This is like *champu*, verse mixed with prose. 'When the king of Birds came



into being, the seven heavens began to shiver. So trembled the seven underground regions. There was raised a hue and cry in the creation of Brahmā (the creator). The gods of heaven was at a fix as to which way to fly. The black coloured bird impressed much terror by its sight; the two eyes were of the colour of the fire. The beak was of a pink colour. Two birds obstructed the sky. The world trembles with the attack of its nails. As the king of Bird stood, he saw innumerable gods.' Another *mantra* similar to this runs thus:—"Sārīrar sambal mukali duāre māṇsa khān; Tāte dilek bajra nakhar ghāo. Chitikila tej-dhārā mukali duāre; Chitikia tej ākāsak gailā; Suryar āthotā rasmi bhaila: Sei tej phuti āsi prithivit parliā: rangā ful haiā prithivit railā." "The flesh is the substance of the body. There was imposed a scratch of the nail severe as the thunder. A current of blood was shot by the open door. Having shot, it started up to the sky. There it became the eight rays (colours) of the Sun, That blood shot and fell on the Earth, and it glows on Earth as a red flower." By their mysticism and archaism, these *mantras* appear to be definitely of earlier origin, probably not later than the twelfth century.

**FULBARI, A SAKTA CENTRE:** Āi Nāms have constant references to the river Pichalā. An interesting description of this river is given by Dr. John Peter Wade (*An Account of Assam, and A Geographical Sketch of Assam, 1800 A.D., Reprinted from the Asiatic Annual Register, 1805 A.D.*).

"This river rises from the Duffola mountain, flows through the Burh Gohaign's province, Naranpoor, and joins the Berhampooter, at Neimookgown, about ten miles to the west of the former... The Pisola performs a winding course of sixty miles from the foot of the mountains... Phoolbarri, famous for a pukka mote, dedicated to Mai, (camaka? Kamakhya) Devorigown, inhabited chiefly by those who attend the temple and kosoowahgown, are the principal towns on its bank." (*Assam in the Eighteenth Century, Introduction, part Second, p. 18*). Interesting enough, the mention of this once "principal", but today almost unheard of, town of Phulbāri (literally Flower Garden, in which sense, it was till of late confused), occurs certainly more than once in the Āi Nāms. There is also certain reference to another river named Tuni now flowing through the island town of Majuli to the north of the Brahmaputra. Evidently then the northern bank of the Brahmaputra, with the town of Ful Bāri having some symbol of the Goddess Ai worship, something like Kāmākhyā worship, centering round that temple. It was probably at the time when the Bāra Bhuyas, who were staunch Sakti worshippers, were in the height of their power and before these Bara Bhuyans were subjugated by the Ahoms on the east and by the Koches on the west. The town of Ful Bāri is near Narayanpur where the great Vaiṣṇava Reformer, Madhawadew, also a Bara Bhuya and formerly a staunch Sakti worshipper, was born. [For texts of Āi Nāms see Neog's collection, *Bhogjarā, 1927.*]

**AI NAMS WITH ALLITERATIVE RHYMING:** Like most other folk-songs, the Āi Nāms are most beautiful and show high poetic imagination



with exquisite beauty of language. Incidentally, they are sung by women as prayers when there are cases of small-pox in a house or in a village. Application of medicine is strictly prohibited in such cases. The songs may number nearly a thousand, and actually show a very mild form of Tantric worship; and as a matter of fact here is nothing like 'Pujā' or offering of sacrifice or even uttering of *mantras* at all save the recitation of these *nāms*. Nay, even the recitation of these songs must in most cases, as a custom, be preceded by the recitation of the great Vaiṣṇavite prayer *Kākuṭi Ghoṣā* contained in the holy *Nām Ghoṣā* by Madhawadew (vs 790-91). The collection *Bhogjara* (1st ed. 1927) contains more than a hundred songs, *Āi Nām*, and a very large majority of them abound in literary beauties of high order. Besides, they show a very large degree of religious faith and devotion and a firm trust in the efficacy of prayer which Tennyson describes in his *Passing of Arthur*. In some of these songs the illiterate women poets invoke the goddess *Āi* with her seven sisters all supposed to be protecting people from small-pox:

Ujāi āhile, Āire sāte bhanī, sātāli parvat juri:  
 Tṛṇ taru latā, save dōai māthā Āi āhibar ṣuni.  
 Sonare cakari, ure jāki māri, rūpare dukhani pākhi:  
 Saḥar furibalai, Āilok āhiche jīva dān māgichō āmi.

'The seven sisters of the goddess have come up covering the seven mountains: grasses, creepers and trees have all bowed low at this intelligence. The golden butterflies with silver wings fly in swarms: and so the goddesses have come here to take a tour, and we are praying to them for our lives.' Again:

Devi Āir gharkhani, suvarṇare kāmī:  
 Kibā pūjā diba lage nājānilō āmi.  
 Āi āhi ulatile dekhile janjāl:  
 Āmi pāpī nedekhilō abhāgī kapāl.  
 Nayāibā nayāibā māṭṛ āmāka cāriā:  
 Tumi taru āmi latā thākibō berīā.  
 Rākhā, rkhā Āi rākhā Māyār bāghe khāy:  
 Tumi māṭṛ nārākhile rākhōtāye nāi.

'The house of the goddess consists of rafters of gold: we did not know what way to worship her. She came and returned finding disorder here; we are unlucky and sinful and hence could not see her. O Mother, stay, stay; leave us not: a tree as yourself must be surrounded by creepers as ourselves. Keep us, O Mother, do keep us: who will then protect us if not you?'

This seems to suggest how Vaiṣṇavism came to absorb the Śākta influence in course of time. These songs are sometimes classified into *Āi- Nām*, *Śitalā Nām*, *Kālī Nām*, *Durgā Nām* etc. But they are only

different names of the Mountain-Daughter Pārvati, Śiva's consort. Yet there are descriptions of three or even seven Āi (Goddesses) in the songs. Whatever this may be, the epithet *nām* applied always to these as to other folk-songs hints at an attempt at their affiliation to Vaiṣṇavite method of devotion,—*nām dharma*, prayer by recitation of names of God, shunning any rituals or rites of worship whatsoever. Along with all other folk-songs they have the impress of modernity in language, and it is only for the freshness of a Śakta spirit informing them so thoroughly that they have been presented prior to Vaiṣṇavite movement. Excellent imageries in Āi *nāms* may be gathered from a few of these songs rendered at random, along with the musical effect of their alliterative rhyming:

"Nājāni somāō Aire phulbārī, nicini chingilo kali :  
Ibārar doṣake kṣamibā Bhavāni, mātō caraṇate dhari".

'Unknowingly have I entered Mother's flower garden, unwittingly have I plucked a bud. Pray, Mother, pardon this fault of mine for the first and last time, I beseech by touching Thy feet'.

"Gadhūlite Āi āhe: padhūlilai caī:  
Mahāmāyā Āi āhe: sonar baṇṣī bāi."

'At dusk Mother comes looking at the home-path. Mother Mahāmāyā comes playing on her flute of gold.'

Although the first and the third couplets assume the form of a *dulari* or *tripadi*, and the second that of *pada* or *payār*, the rhythm still depends rather on accents than on syllables, and the musical effect is enhanced by richness in alliteration as in "Gadhūli" "padhūli" "nicini chingilo" etc. depending better on similarity in sound. The idea of Pox-Goddesses or Cholera-Goddesses, and their seven sisters, rather kindly, is also found elsewhere as in Southern India.

### BOOK THREE

## LATER MEDIAEVAL ASAMIYA LITERATURE

### I. THE PRELIMINARY FACTS OF THE PERIOD

**POLITICAL CHANGES:** Epigraphic records of the Naraka dynasty, through Puṣya Varman, Śālastambha and Brahmapāla as heads of three different lines, bring us direct to the middle of the twelfth century, ending with the reign of Dharma Pāla. In the Silimpur inscription (*Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. xiii, p. 22) the name of Jayapāla, has been mentioned as a king of Kāmarūpa who offered 900 gold coins and grant of land yielding one thousand 'droṇas' of paddy as his Tulā-puruṣa gift to one scholar, Prahāsa. Jayapala's name further appears in a verse in *Chandogyaparisishtaparakasa* a manuscript preserved in the India office, London (*Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. xiii, P. 289). Mm. Padmanath opines (*K.R., K.S.*, pp. 36-38) that both these records may be assigned to the middle of the twelfth century which must also have been the time of Jayapala. We have no local records to corroborate. On the other hand, one of the early Vaiṣṇavite biographies of the sixteenth century (Rāmcaran Thakur's *Guru Carit*, ch. ix, vs. 2575-78) definitely affirms that Dharma Pāla left his kingdom as an exile and it was annexed to the kingdom of his cousin, Durlabh Narayan whose lineage has also been clearly sketched (Neog's *Introduction to Assam*, pp. 48-65). The kingdom of Durlabh has been called Gauḍa and that of Dharmapala Kamatā, so that when these contiguous kingdoms were amalgamated, the royal titles Gaudeśwar and Kāmeswar (or Kānteswar, abbreviated from Kāmateswar) became of course synonymous. It then appears that the kingdom of Kāmarūpa was thus divided after the middle of the twelfth century among the members of the royal family. Any way we pass through a period of darkness and twilight before we come to the peep of dawn in the regular chronicles of the Ahom invaders. For the interval of at least a century, we have a few candles of foreign records to illumine our way. Muhammad Bakhtiyār Khiliji, who overthrew Lakṣman, the last Sena king of Bengal, about 1198, and whose invasion of Tibet is described in Tobaquat-i-Nasiri (*Raverty's translation*, Vol. I, p. 560). Riyaz-us-Salatin (*Abdus Salam's translation*, pp. 55-58) started his expedition to the north and was saddled with heavy loss of his soldiers and repulsed, Bakhtiyar himself securing a hair-breadth scape in his efforts to invade Kamarupa. This was about March 27, 1206, and the famous Kānāi Barāśi rock inscription near Gauhati states clearly "Śāka 1128: "Śāke Turagayugmese madhumāsātrayodaśe: Kāmarūpam samāgatya

Turaṣkāḥ kṣayamāyayuh." The Tavaquat-Nasiri (Raverty, Vol. I, p. 594) mentions that about 1227, Ghiyāsuddīn, the Governor of Bengal, failed also in their second invasion of Kāmarūpa. The same source (p. 263) again reveals that about 1257 Ikhtiyaruddīn Yuzbak Tughrilkhān launched the third attack of Kāmarūpa but met with sad reverses resulting in the loss of all lives including that of the Sultan himself. The Ālamgir-nāmāh (p. 731) narrates, about what appears to be the fourth Muhammadan invasion of Kāmarūpa in 1337, that "Muhammad Shāh sent 100,000 horsemen well-equipped to Asam, but the whole army perished in that land of witchcraft and not a trace of it was left. He sent a second army to avenge the former disaster, but when they came to Bengal they would go no farther, and the plan had to be given up." Many cannons lying scattered in Asam still bear innumerable evidences of such victories over the persisting Muhammedan invaders with such engravings on them as "Yavanam jivā astramidam prāptam" (*Report on the Progress of Historical Research in Assam*, 1897, Appendix i). These Muhammadan attacks of Kāmarūpa from the west almost synchronises with the invasions of the country from east by the Āsams or Āhoms belonging to the Thāi clan of the Shān tribe and hailing from somewhere in the northern and eastern hills of upper Burma, perhaps from Maulung, under their leader Sukapha in 1228, gradually subduing its earlier settlers the Muttaks, Morans, Kacharis, Chutiya's and Bāra Bhuyās.

**RELIGIOUS STRUGGLES:** The Bar-Gangā rock inscription discovered of late in the Mikir Hills of Nagāo, Asam (*Journal of the Assam Research Society*, Vol. III, No. 3) is the earliest document of neo-Vaiṣṇavism found so far. Here, Mahabhūta Varma, who reigned in Kāmarūpa in the early sixth century, has been styled as "Param Bhāgavata;" curiously enough, even exactly as "the Gupta Kings, Chandragupta II, Kumaragupta and Skandagupta are styled as Param Bhagavata on their coins, their dates ranging from 400-460 (R. G. Bhandarkar's *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Minor Religious Sects*, 1913). Although the copper-plate inscriptions of Kāmarūpa down to the second land-grant of Dharma Pāla of the middle of the eleventh century have the traditional invocation to Śiva, traces of references, in the varying degrees, to Buddhism and even Vaiṣṇavism, are indeed not rare, Dharma Pāla third inscription boldly broke away from the time-honoured tradition of the Naraka line, and proved his sincere zeal for Vaiṣṇavism not only by omitting the name of Śiva and inserting that of Viṣṇu instead, but also by himself composing the first eight verses, headed by the invocation to Viṣṇu, and making a remarkable land-grant to a Vaiṣṇava—"Yo bālyataḥ prabhṛti Mādhvapaḍapadmapūjāprapancaracanā (ṃ) suciraṃ cakāra" (V. -8). But this does not necessarily mean that Vaiṣṇavism which peeped into Asam

at least in the early sixth century, had a smooth sailing from this time onward. Far from it. One of the earliest Assamese Vaiṣṇavite biographies of the sixteenth century distinctly tells us that Dharma Pal left his kingdom as an exile simply through the alleged curse of Kāmākhyā, perhaps for his change of faith to Vaiṣṇavism (Rāmcaran, ch. v. 2572). Such must at least have been the popular superstition. The next best authentic record bearing on the social history of Kāmarūpa is the Sanskrit work, *Kālīkā Purāṇa*, almost belonging to this period. It describes (ch. xviii, vs. 42-51) the main and minor *pithas* of Kāmarūpa ch. lxii, vs. 1-148) which exclude few towns and villages, few rivers and hillocks not sacred to some goddess or other. The awful and horrible practices in accompaniment of these worships are also described with special reference to flesh, wine and women (ch. lxxiv, vs. 205-211 ff), even human sacrifices being directly enjoined (ch. Lxvi vs. 91 ff). These curious practices coming down from time immemorial must have formed a part and parcel of the religion of the Kirātas who must have been responsible for the worship of the phallic symbol or female organ of Kāmākhyā, which name is in all probability, derived from an Austric speech. Two copper plates, discovered of late in the North Lakhimpur subdivision of Asam and clearly dated, which dates correspond to 1392 and 1410 A.D. belong to a king of Sadhayāpurī, probably Sadiyā, in the North-East Frontier Province (*J.A.R.S.*, Vol. iii, no. 2; January 1935, pp. 39-47). These copper plates, invoking Vāsudeva, of course along with Śiva and Pārvati, and making land-grants to one Hari who was a great devotee of Vāsudeva, throw a flood of light on the political and social condition of Kāmarūpa in its extreme east. These inscriptions also prove that the kingdom of Kāmarūpa was already divided against itself among its own kings.

**LITERARY CHARACTERISTICS.** As in religion, so in language and literature, the age under review is an important period of transition or of twilight, through which we pass into the dawn of distinctive Assamese language and literature after the middle of the fifteenth century. We include in this period such works as *Śūnya Purāṇ*, *Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan*, and *Gopīcandrar Gān*, earlier considered as Bengali works. Not only these, but even literary works of the post-fifteenth century, such as the Assamese renderings of the epics by Kavindra, Sanjaya and Ananta Kandali happened to be welcomed as Bengali. This is because the first stage in the differentiation of Bengali from Assamese was still not marked and the two languages had not yet receded from the main metropolis at Koc-behar to the extremes in West Bengal and upper Assam respectively. In religious ideas the people were yet to pass from what was pagan to what is truly religious, that is from the gross to the refined, from the mediae-

val to the renaissance ideas. *Śūnya Pūrāṇ* shows the starting point of the transition in this regard and *Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan* a *via media*. It is religious in form, but secular in essence. We welcome in this period more than half a dozen Assamese translators of the Epics as pre-Vaiṣṇavite poets as we find them in their works today. The colophons of such great poets of this period like Hem Saraswati and Mādhaw Kandali, as they are, differ very little from the colophons of Śaṅkardew, phoebus in the solar system of Asam Vaisnavism, after the middle of the fifteenth century, and of his great followers. This must be very curious, if not suspicious, unless we admit that Śaṅkardew was not the first preacher of Vaiṣṇavism in Asam, or that these colophons were later incorporated into those works in the Vaiṣṇava period proper. We are led to hold the second view what for the fact that no Vaiṣṇavite preacher is known before Śaṅkardew and what for the reason that actually an early Vaiṣṇavite biography of about the seventeenth century clarifies this point in connection with how Mādhawdew and Śaṅkardew themselves came to incorporate the first and the last cantos of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, not found in the earlier work of Mādhaw Kandali. One very important point about these Vaiṣṇavite reformers must be borne in mind that it was always their aim in view to keep intact and even to repair what could be done without destroying and used for their purpose; so these earlier verse renderings of the Epics, neither Vaiṣṇavite nor non-Vaiṣṇavite by themselves, were naturally made judicious use of by the great Vaisnavite reformers. The Vaiṣṇavite biography under reference tells us in so many words that the original colophons said only 'Subha, Śubha,' and the Vaiṣṇavite colophons, as they are found today, were later incorporated into them as an 'embroidery work' for beauty or merit.

## II. SONGS OF NATHISM AND DHARMA CULT

**MAINAMATIR GAN:** Sir George Grierson is responsible for the first collection of the songs of Mainamati and Gopicandrar Gān in the district of Rungpur, and for their publication in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society* in 1878. They were oral and no manuscript of these songs had yet been available. By the second decade of the present century another text of these songs and two manuscripts, neither more than two centuries old, have since been collected in Tipperah and Cittagong districts and the other in new North Bengal. All these and other materials besides have been utilised to compile the two volumes now published as *Gopīchandrār Gān* (published by the Calcutta University Part I, 1922, and Part II, 1924).

Maināmatī is said to have been an accomplished lady and one of the 180 (nao buri) wives of King Manikcandra who not being satisfied

with this number married further with the result that Mainamati, the veteran among the co-wives left his house in quest of peace. Moreover, subjects of Manikcandra, known before only to peace and plenty, began however to experience very trying times indeed to the effect that curse of Providence fell on him and the remaining period of his life was cut short from 18 years to just its half. Though now living separately, his devoted wife Mainamatī could not but come to the side of her royal husband once more at the time of need and move heaven and earth indeed for her husband's rescue. She was however deceived by the god of death who took away the life of her husband sending her off from him on some plea. She fought against this wrong also and a compromise was brought about by her religious preceptor Goroksanath in the shape of granting that a son would be born to her. This was also defective in the sense that her son was to enjoy the duration of his life for eighteen summers only; and Mainamati made further appeal, with the effect that her would-be son was to be immortal provided that he would worship Hārhi Siddha. After Mainamati had performed the funeral rites of her husband, she gave birth to the promised son. It was Gopicandra, the hero of the songs. At 9 (or at 12) Gopicandra took Adunā and Padunā, two daughters of some king Haricandra, to wives. Trouble came to his mother Mainamati when for the good of her son she wanted him to be a disciple of Siddha Harhi and lead the life of an ascetic. After a series of trials both for Mainamati and her son, Gopicandra was restored to his mother and wives. His people then witnessed a new era of peace and plenty, and life began to pass smoothly with all.

**GOROKSANATH AND NATHISM.** The historicity of this event and personality of Gopicandra, Manikcandra or Goroksanath as shown by the learned editors are not yet fully confirmed by facts. All that may be safely said of Goroksanath is that he or they, for there might indeed be more than one Goroksanath (Preface, pp. 14-15), must be responsible for the foundation of Nathism, and it is this Nāth (yugi or yogi) community thriving in the western part of the old kingdom of Kāmarupa who used to sing these songs, and transmit them from generation to generation till they have been recorded. Reference is found to these Yugis in the Mādhaw Kandali's Rāmayana in Asamya where a humorous description is given (Ayodhya Kāṇḍa, vs. 6-8).

As regards the identity of Gopicandra, the compiler, while claiming him to be a king of Bengal, incidentally admits that though the legend about him is popular in several provinces of India, in different versions, his very name had been something foreign to Bengali ears till of late (Preface, pp. 3-4), perhaps till before these songs were fami-



liarised to them by the press. This must be a fact worthy of note. Recently a stone image of Vasudeva containing an inscription has been discovered in Vikrampur (Paikpara village), Dacca. The inscription states that the image was constructed in the 23rd regnal year of one Govindacandra by one Gangadasa, son of Parodaso, (Bharatvarsa Jais-tha. 1348 B.S.) But one cannot say that Govindacandra can be identified with Gopicandra for songs relating to this legend have been collected in Orissa also; and although the compiler and editors of these songs make no mention of the fact, songs of Gopicandra (Gopicand or Gopichan) are quite prevalent in Assam (*Janā Gābharur Git*, 1924). The hero of this work is certainly Gopichandra, though it does not correspond to the Mainamatir Gan in all details.

Hunter's Statistical Accounts of Koc Behar (pp. 360-62) mentions and in 1809 Dr. Hamilton is said to have personally witnessed the ruins of the forts of Mainamati and Hariscandra. In the face of such facts, one can hardly see any reason why they should grope in the dark and take recourse to wild guessing. Goroksanath was a disciple of Mina Pa with whom is associated again the ballads of Gorakha Vijay and others connected with Maināmati, Gopichandra and Manikcandra of old Kāmarūpa.

What is true of Srikriṣṇa Kirtan (*J.A.R.S.*, Vol. VIII, No. 1, January, 1941) is to a great extent true of these songs with the difference that these were mainly oral and collected, and we have no genuine specimen in regard to their language. The manuscripts found may hardly have passed their first centenary. They were discovered mainly in North Bengal, part of old Kāmarūpa, and in Cittagong, the dialect of which latter place shows an appreciable amount of Assamese influence, as can be seen from Grierson's *Linguistic Survey of India*.

**THE LINGUISTIC ASPECT:** One should then naturally expect that the language of these songs, as they are at least two centuries old, must be Assamese, since both linguistically and culturally Rangpur specially used to form an integral part of old Assam. The present collection was mainly gathered from people of recent times after this district was politically and linguistically absorbed by Bengal, and was edited by Bengali scholars who are not familiar with the many colloquial terms in Assamese. The collection opens with such lines as:—

Mānikcandra Rājā chil dharmī bar rājā;  
 Maenāk bivā karil tār nao burhi bhārjā.  
 Maenāk bivā kari rājār napuril maner ās;  
 Tār par Dābpurar panch kanyā bivā kari puri gal manar hābilās.  
 Āji āji kāli kāli bāra bachhar haila;  
 Dekhibar napāri Marharaj bvagal (belag?) kari dil.  
 Sei Maenāk ghar bandi dila Ferusa nagare".

After making sufficient allowances and leaving due margin for the unfavourable circumstances under which they have been collected from a people now almost compelled to pass for Bengalees, and edited by Bengali scholars, those opening verses in the first page of the book, may be seen to present enough unmistakable traits of Assamese idioms, grammar and vocabulary. The accusative form in modern Assamese as in the old is 'ka' as 'Maenāk' 'Maenamati' etc. invariably shown as opposed to the corresponding Bengali form 'ke'. As definitely opposed to Bengali the negative sign to an Assamese verb is always prefixed and never suffixed and "napuril" (nupuril) 'napāri' etc. faithfully follow this rule without exception. Assamese present participle is mostly 'i' as it is invariably 'ia' in Bengali; and "kari" "nakari" "bandi" (bāndhi) "kāti", etc. confirm this use. Also words like "bivā", "bia" (biya), "bagal" (balag), "kandal", "hābilās", etc. and phrase and idioms like "ghar bandi" (bāndhi) dile, "carkhā" kāti bhāt khāi", "āji āji kālī kālī bāra bachar hail" etc. etc. corroborate the original Assamese idioms etc. beyond doubt. Grafting of such Bengali forms as "er" in the possessive case in place of "ar" found in old and modern Assamese is like a superficial new coating and an exception which only proves the rule. Thus, the text of these songs complete in 504 royal 8 vo pages abounds with such unmistakable traits of Assamese idioms, grammar and vocabulary; and quoting all illustrations would mean quoting almost every line.

**SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL ASPECTS:** Many of the annotations have been learned and exhaustive indeed. In explaining "Maenamati char-khā kāti bhāt khāi" the learned compiler has not been satisfied by making a reference to a certain 'sutra' of the Rig Veda in which mention has been made of women spinning and weaving; but he also cites the example of Assam where spinning and weaving of "endi" and "mugā" cloths are still regarded as an honourable occupation even by aristocratic ladies. This illustration serves his purpose better to show that it was nothing degrading for Mainamati, a queen as she had been, to take to spinning and weaving. But the list has been swelled up by a number of colloquial Assamese words too familiar for Assamese readers to need any explanation. Also, many of the words have unfortunately been misinterpreted by the learned editors, owing to their lack of familiarity with Assamese. The word "Saranga" (Serenga) in "Saranga naler bara" (p. 2) which actually means "Loose" or 'thin' has been misinterpreted as 'Sar sadris' (like the arrow) which never conveys the real sense. So also 'saru saru' (small) in p. 72 has been misinterpreted as 'mridu madhu' (soft and sweet) and so forth.

"Mainamati carkhā kāti bhāt khāi bandar bhitar" (G.C.G., p. 1) is very significant particularly in regard to the word "bandar" (port). King Manikcandra and his son Gopicandra were rulers in the western part of the country of old Kamarupa and their capital was in the present Rangpur district where the ruins of some of their forts were discovered by Dr. Buchanan Hamilton in the first decade of the nineteenth century. In *Introduction to Assam* (Neog, 1947) the Eastern Sea and the country residence of King Bhagadutta situated in the present district of Rangpur (J.A.S.B., 1838, p. 2) on the northern bank of the Eastern Sea, have been mentioned. In all probability this mention of "bandar" (port) refers to the ancient port of Rangpur. This seems to be confirmed by the fact that in Sylhet, which formed perhaps the eastern shore of the Sea, there is a place called Bandar Bazar (port market). "Manik candra Pal (?) ruled in Northern Bengal during the first half of the eleventh century, and the work in question must have been composed shortly after his death." (p. 56). The quotations given to support his view-point from linguistic evidence are: "Najāio najāio rājā dūr desāntar"; etc. (pp. 58-59). The instances of so-called archaism of old Bengali only show their Assamese forms, lingering despite the unfavourable circumstances under which they were collected, edited and published. The grammatical rules involved in "najāio", "jiyai", "dimu" (dim—I shall give) "badanat", "bāghe", "rūpar", "mok", "mui", "striḱ", etc. and such words as "bāo" (fanning) are unmistakable traces of Assamese.

SUNYA PURĀN: Dinescandra (H.B.L.L.) writes: "The great exponent Dharma cult in Bengal was, by general acceptance, Ramai Pundit, a contemporary of Dharma Pal II. who reigned in Gauda in the early part of the 11th century A.D. Rajendra Chol's rock inscription (1012 A.D.) makes mention of this monarch. Ramai Pandit was born at Champai ghat on the river Dwarakeswar in the District of Bankura." This is all we hear about Ramāi and about the time and place of his birth. He further writes (p. 68)—"The oldest songs relating to Siva...meant for Bengali villagers" are the following given in the Śūnya Purān:—

"Jakhan āchen Gosāin huyā Digambar;  
Ghare ghare bhikhā māgi bulen Isar.  
Rajani parabhāte bhikhār lāgi yāy;  
Kuthāe pāi kuthāe napāi .....  
Pukhari kandāi-e laiba bhūma khāni;  
Arasa haile jen chīcae diba pāni  
Ghare dhān thākileka parbhu sukhe anna khāba;  
Annar bihane parbhu kata dunkha pāba."

Accepting the view that the author might belong to the present province of Bengal, one must admit that the language betrays sufficient

influence of Assamese, even as we find it in the quotations. We are in doubt about the occurrence of the words "āchen" and "bulen" which should have been "āche" and "bule" (bole) in Assamese; but if they do occur in the original, the words "yāy," "pāni," "napāi," etc. which are correct Assamese, must have respectively been 'yān', 'pān' "pān nā" etc. as in Bengali, in order to be consistent. But save those two particular words, the general tone of the language and the words "ghare ghare" (house to house) and "pāni" (water) are distinctly colloquial Assamese.

The *Śūnya Purāṇa* gives a description of Sunya (space) which says:—

"Nahi chil jal thal nahi chil ākās;  
Meru mandar nāchil nā (chil) kailās.  
Nahi s(r)isti chil ar nāhi sura nar;  
Brahmā Viṣṇu nachil nāchil abar....  
Au mittu nāchil janmar tāraṇ.  
Sunnat bhraman prabhur sune kari bhar."

Besides the general tone of language, such words as "nāchil", equivalent to Bengali "chilanā" are worthy of note. The contents simply describe nihilism.

As he, puts it: "There are several passages in prose in the book (*Śūnya Purāṇ*) which furnish curious specimens of very old Bengali mixed with later interpolations.....the following lines that formed a part of the original writings of Ramai Pundit....."He Bhagavān, bāra bhāi bāra āditta hāth pāti neha sevakar argha puṣpa pāni sewak haba sukhi. Dhamat kāmui guru pandit deula dān pāti samsār bhokta emoni sannyāsi gati jāti" (*H.B.L.L.*, p. 70), "Rātīt pathar cāri pati kar: kate hal sud sānar-arha." "Kāncan bāndhia māje karila katakāl mandape fatikar thām lage candan nadan aruṣat dāke lāgi gajan" (*Ibid*, p. 59). "Deul dehara bhānge; kyārha firhya khāi range: pakhar pakhar bole bol" *Śūnya Purāṇ*, p. 140). The book contains many passages of this nature and the learned editor has, in an apologetic tone, avowed his inability to explain many of them. (*H.B.L.L.*).

"Hath (or hāt) pāti," spreading hands' (or palms) is clear Assamese. So are the verb forms in "haba" and 'hal', and the noun "pāni" (water), etc. The words "sevakar" with the sixth case-ending 'ar', not with Bengali 'er', and "rātīt" with the seventh case-ending "ta", not as Bengali 'e', are also distinctively Assamese. There seem to be many things which the copyists have made confusion worse confounded. There are many mantras in Assamese prose and verse of this nature describing Śūnya (space) but with language much less obscure. Again,

"Samkha upajil kar samkhar vicār;  
Kaha kaha pandit samkhar sār.  
"Kon samkhe nāchōe pāni;  
Dakhiṇ samkhe nāchōe pāni."

These four lines are clear Assamese and may be literally translated as: 'The conch is born. Do make an enquiry of the conch. Say, Say, O pundit, (what is) the essence (purport) of the conch. What conch does not touch water? The right conch does not touch water'. Besides the words "upajil" (Bengali, janmila), "nāchoe" (Beng., chhoenā), pāni (Beng., jal), the grammar followed is perfectly Assamese. The first case-ending "e" added to the subjects Samkha of the transitive verb "nāchoe" in both the third and the fourth lines, the dropping of the first case-ending, 'ar' as opposed to Bengali 'er', added to 'Samkha' in the first and second lines, are clear proofs of Assamese.

Dr. Sen wanted to place these songs of the Sunya Purān about the early eleventh century, while according to Yoges Chandra Vidyānidhi they cannot be earlier than the fourteenth, and on the authority of Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji they cannot be earlier than the fifteenth century. Particularly from its linguistic similarities with the Assamese mantras on Dharma, both in verse and prose, we are inclined to hold the view that the Śūnya Purān, at least in an oral form, could have had its existence about the thirteenth century, and this may possibly be confirmed by the social condition which favoured the composition and growth of such ideas.

### III. THE SAHAJĪĀ EPIC OF KṚṢṆA KĪRTAN

**THE BENGALI EDITION:** The Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan, is the next great literary work of unusual interest and of extra-ordinary importance. It is considered by Bengali scholars, in all acceptance, as the third great step in the ladder of the Bengali language, the first two being the Buddhist songs and the Śūnya Purān respectively. It has been published by the Bangiya Sahitya Parisad with a preface by Sri Ramendra Sundar Trivedi and most ably edited by Sri Basanta Ranjan Rai. It appears that the book is printed from the only manuscript available and that too with the first page damaged and the last pages missed. The photographs of a few pages of the manuscript have been made into blocks and have been incorporated into the book as appendices. One must be in full agreement with Sri Trivedi's statement in the preface to the effect that not only those few pages but the whole book was worth printing like this, funds permitting; and that no ancient work in Bengali was edited and published with such care upto-date.

The learned editor frankly admits in his Foreword that neither sufficient autobiographical elements of the author, nor the name of the work nor the time of its composition, not even the time of the copyist, is to be found in the manuscript. The work has been named Kṛṣṇa

Kirttan by the editor after the long-heard-of name of such a work under the conviction that this was the self-same work. Whether its author Candidās is again the selfsame person with the author of the songs of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, so widely prevalent, and whether it may be possible for one poet to be the author of such widely divergent compositions, and if not, who is the genuine Candidas and who the duplicate, these and lots of such things remain open to question. All the same, the fact remains that the work is a monumental discovery.

Śrī Trivedi in his learned preface to the book assigns three reasons for which he considers the work invaluable. The first point is in regard to the time of composition of the work. On the authority of late Rākhaldas Banerji, an expert on Indian scripts, this is the earliest document of the Bengali language discovered till now, and he assigns it to the fourteenth century. It is suggested that it may even be Candidas's own handwriting. The second point is about its language which, according to him, is clear West Bengal language of the fourteenth century. The third and the last point is the discovery of genuine Candidās; to Sri Trivedi the songs long passing in the name of Cāndidas are mostly modern and do not belong to Cāndidas whose one work is Kṛṣṇa Kirttan alone.

**THE ASSAMESE CLAIM:** From the Assamese standpoint too, it is an invaluable document. Enough has been said in regard to the language of *Bauddha Gān O Doha* and *Śūnya Purān*. We are convinced that these three works with the Kṛṣṇa Kirttan, belong to a stage in which Bengali and Assamese were not distinct identities, but were one, for which the generic name Kāmarupi might be used. Dr. Chatterji admits: "There is no genuine specimen of Bengali before 1300 A.C." (O.D.B.L.). Rai Bahadur Yogesh Chandra Vidya Nidhi holds the view that it is doubtful whether *Bauddha Gān O Dohā*, one thousand year old, can really be called Bengali (*Bangiya Sahitya Parishad Patrika*, 1326 B.E.). To re-iterate (*A Peep into the History of Assamese Literature from the earliest times till 1940 A.D.*, Introduction, p. xiv), there is no genuine specimen Bengali literature proper before the fifteenth century; and we quote a great Bengali scholar in support of our view: "Bengali literature, properly so called, began with imitations of the songs of Jayadeva in the fourteenth century, and with translations of the great Sanskrit epics into Bengali in the fifteenth century." (Preface, R. C. Dutt's *Literature of Bengal*, p. IV). "Kasiram's work is the first great and national literary work in Bengali language, it is a foundation of rock on which the national literature of Bengal has been subsequently built up. . . . Kasiram Das is the father of Bengali literature properly so called." (R. C. Dutt's *Literature of Bengal*, p. 38).

**DATE OF COMPOSITION:** According to Rākhāldās Banerji, the epigraphical expert of Bengal, the Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan contains three forms of scripts; ancient, imitation of ancient and comparatively modern, of one or more copyists. This expert assigns this work to a period earlier than 1385 A.D. from a comparison of the script of this work with that of a Sanskrit work, Sudra Paddhati, where "Sam 1442 Sake" is recorded. Considering this to be a Sambat era, corresponding with 1385 A.C. the expert assigned the latter half of the fourteenth century to this work. But Mm. Haraprasad Sastri challenges this point and opines that the date 1385 A.D. found on the basis of the date of Sudra Paddhati is wrong since the word Śāke is distinctly recorded, and "1442 Sake" can mean nothing more or less than 1527 A.D. (*Bangiya Sahitya Prasad Patrika*, 1326 B.E.). Also the learned editor of Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan, opines in the same journal (*B.S.P.P.* 1326 B.E.) that acquaintance of Candidās with Vidyapati, the famous poet of Behar, took place in the first half of the fifteenth century. Even the very evidence of late Banerji entertains grave suspicions; for if the manuscript contains ancient, imitation of ancient and comparatively modern script, the work as a whole must belong to the period of the last script. All these evidences drive to the conclusion that the work is decidedly post-fourteenth century and may have belonged to the latter half of the fifteenth century. The manuscript of course persistently uses the Assamese script, 'ra', etc. throughout the book.

Mm. Śāstrī openly discusses the question of authorship of Kṛṣṇa-kīrtan and of the Sahajia songs passing in the name of Candidās, the lover of the washer-woman Rāmī. He observes that this work contains neither the name of Rāmī nor that of Nānnur whose "Padavali" is extant. The author of K. K. refers to himself as a worshipper of Vāsuli, who is also a Sahajīā and used to sing such songs, and sometimes with Yoginis by his side. One of such devotees of Vāsuli followed Jayadew in writing K. K., and another would now sing pure Sahajīā songs and then Sahajīā songs connected with Rādhā and Krishna. (*B.S.P.P.*, 1326 B.E.). Thus it appears that Candidās, the author of K.K. was distinct from Candidās, if any, the author of Sahajīā songs.

Vidyānidhi directly hits the points when he says that from the ample quotations given by the learned editor of K.K. one of the two conclusions is irresistible that either Assamese and old Bengali were one, or that K.K. had a round through the Assamese-speaking country. (*B.E.P.P.*, 1326 B.E.). We feel inclined to accept the former view, namely that Assamese and old Bengali were one and the same language. The first departure of Bengali is marked by the Kasiram's Mahabharat, for which we take an eminent Bengali like Ramesh Chanda Dutta as



authority, besides the literature itself. That Bengali and Assamese as distinct languages were yet unborn while K.K. was composed, an analysis of the text itself will show.

**PLAN OF KRSNA KIRTAN:** The Kṛṣṇa Kirtan is divided into ten chapters. The first is the Janma khaṇḍa (on birth). The first line, as it has been found, begins—"Sava Deve sabhā pātīlā ākāse." So it is "Deve" with the sign of the first case-ending of Assamese "e" added, and "pātīlā, not 'pātīlen' or so, as in Bengali. 'Sabhā patā' is colloquial and chaste Assamese. In the Uttara Kāṇḍa rendering of the Rāmāyaṇa by Śaṅkardew we find "Āchanta Rāghawa jeve dibya sabhā pātī". Thus even in the first line we find the Assamese elements of grammar etc. all perfect, and this shows only the type. Then we come across the word 'meli' or 'mili', not 'melia' etc., for according to Vararuchi "K-va-i-ah" that is, for the Sanskrit 'ktvia' the Sauraseni prakrit has 'io', e.g., 'milio' or 'melio'. Though in old Assamese we have both 'ia' and 'io' or 'i', K.K. more often uses 'i' as in modern Assamese.

The morphology of the word "Barhu" or "Barhuā" is indeed interesting. In this first chapter occurs:—

Eke tumi kula nāri, kul āchhe tomār bairi  
 Ār tahe Barhuār badhu;  
 Kahe Barhu Chandidāse, kul-sil kul-sil sava bhāse,  
 Lāgil kaliā prem madhu."  
 "Barhuār Jhiari Barh nām dhari  
 Tāhe Barhuār bau".....

"Barhu Baddo Mahān", "Barha" (great): according to Prakrita Paingal. In Sanskrit 'Bar' is equivalent to 'respectful' 'superior' etc. "Badu", "Barhuā" or "Baruwā" is thus the word in different forms, and came to be a family designation. Thus Candidās was Barhu; Rādhā was Barhuār Jhiari (Sans. Dohitri) or daughter. 'Kaliā' the blackish, is Assamese from Kaalā (black); and 'dhari' (Beng. dhariā) is after modern Assamese.

"Kahilo moi sakal tohamār thā-e" is a line occurring in this chapter. Such Assamese forms "kahilo", and not Beng. 'kahilām' appear all through. The same is the case with "moi", as opposed to Beng. 'āmi'. The Magadhi Prakrit seems to support this Assamese form which may be compared with Vidyapati's "mohi", "moyen", "moye". "Tohmār" (tomār) from Prakrit 'tumbhār' and "tohme" (tumi) from Prakrit "tumhe" and Oriya 'tumbhe' may be compared with such forms as 'tāsambāk' 'tāsambār' etc. used by Sankardew and his school. "Thāe" compares and contrasts respectively with Assamese "thāi" and Bengali "thān" in use.

"Māak buyilā āihāne", is an interesting line. "Māak" or 'Mākak' with the sign of the second case-ending in Assamese, as opposed to Bengali 'māke', and 'buyilā' or 'bulilā', in both cases with the dropping of the consonants 'ka' and 'la' respectively are interesting. Such dropping is characteristic of Assamese and the most common instances

are 'jai' (jadi), 'buishe' (bujiche), "khuiche" (khujiche) etc. Besides, "bulil", "bole" etc. from Assamese "bol", 'to speak' are quite in agreement with Assamese and they are not rare in the work.

So also such words as "dhal" from Sanskrit 'dhal' and Prakrit 'dhal' meaning 'white'; and poār from Sans. 'praval'. ("ralayoravedah") and in Vidyapati "Adhara auranga jāni nirasa pavār", "dudhaka parase pavāra dhaval bhela", are interesting. Assamese "āi" and Assamese "burhī-āi" (grand-mother); and "barhāyi" or "barh-āyi", Assamese "Bar ai" (senior mother) are interesting. Assamese 'Āi' (mother) coincides exactly with Marathi 'Āi', as perhaps Assamese 'Bāi' (elder sister) with 'Bai' as Mirā Bāi of western India. The word "bāt" from Prakrit "Batta Panthah" (as opposed to Beng. rāstā), often used in this book, is another curious word, also finding place in the Buddhist songs.

From the above, it is obvious that K.K. may be regarded more as a regular early Assamese than an early Bengali work (Neog's "Sri Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan and its language", *Journal of the Assam Research Society*, Vol. VIII, No. 1, January, 1941, as also Neog's "Sri Kṛṣṇa Kīrtanar bhāṣā Bangalā ne" in *Asam Sahitya Sabhā Patrikā*, Vol. VIII, No. 1, 1939). The second and third chapters are Tāmbul (Areca Nut) and Dān (gift) khaṇḍas respectively.

The fourth chapter is on Boat, but the word Nā or nāo alone finds place in the songs and nowhere 'naukā' has been used.

"Tāk soarite mor mane barh tāp;  
Ekhoi narākhileka tor mao bap".

appear like an echo of some Assamese Vaisnavite works describing the milk-maids' lament; so the lines like "Dhau dekhi mor hāle save gā", quoted above, remind us of such beautiful Assamese Vaishnavite songs, Dihā nām:

"Dhau dekhi hāle-jāl gā, he kaliā,  
kāṣat capāi diā nāo."

'Seeing the waves (of worldly troubles) the body (rather the mind) is moving to and fro. Therefore, O Black One (Kṛṣṇa), make my boat (in the voyage of life) approach its harbour (that is, God)'.

The fifth chapter and sixth or the Bhar and the Brindaban khaṇḍas (on Burden and on Brindaban) are also full of such elements. Such lines "Tatan-lotok lok same neha" etc. may be compared with Ram Sarawati's "Bhīme bole śuna hera tetana-latak".

The seventh and eighth chapters deal with subduing the Kali snake and with Yamuna and sacrifice respectively, and the ninth and tenth chapters with the Baṁśī and Rādhā Birah respectively.

**INFLUENCES AND AFFINITIES:** Though K.K. deals with the life of Kṛṣṇa, it is at best a sahañiā poem by a devotee of Candī. Such lines as "Madan garal, khandan Radha, māthār mandan more: caran pallava āropa Rādhā, mor māthā upare" remind the famous lines of Jaydew's *Gīta Govinda*, "Smara garala khaṇḍanam, mama śirasi maṇḍnam, dehi pada pallavamudaram". K.K. is really more sensual than sensuous.

The following poem from Brindāban khaṇḍa, written in Kusum-mālā metre reminding us of Śaṅkardew's poems of the same metre, and also his famous description of the flower-garden in Harmohon, is quoted for its rhythm and excellent music.

"Tamāl kusum cikur gaṇe;  
 Nil kurubak tor nayane.  
 Suput nāsā tila fule;  
 Dekhi tor gandajuga mahale,  
 Adhar suranga bāndhuli fule;  
 Kanna yuga tor ebag hule.  
 Mukulit kunda tor dasane;  
 Khantari kusum tor vasane.  
 Bhuja jug hem yuthikā māle;  
 Aśok tabak kara yugale.  
 Mukulit thal kamal tane;  
 Rom rāji tāt atayigane.  
 Gabhīr nābhi nāgeswar fule;  
 Kanak keteki jangha yugale .  
 Caran kamal thal kamale;  
 Ānguli campak kalikā jvale.  
 Nakhar nikar dekhi gulāle;  
 Siris kusum tanu sakale.  
 Kanak campak kusum pānti;  
 Tohmar sakal śarir kanti.  
 Neoāli sewāli mähli bikāse;  
 Tohmār madhur iṣat hāse.  
 Dekho mo tor ful śarīre;  
 Gāila Caṇḍidās Vāsuli bare."

Another poem in the Brindāban khaṇḍa (p. 205-208) in a different metre reminds us once more of Śaṅkardew's description of Mohini in *Chabi* metre:

"Eke eke rhitugane, bilās kailā āpane  
 Kusumit sava tarugane;  
 Tin bhuvana mājhe Kathaho nādekhilo  
 Daiba niyojana hen thāne. ....  
 Kusum samuh madhu pia, madhumatta madhukar  
 Nikare madhur jhankāre;  
 Kusumit latā kunie berhil vividh gunje  
 Manmath kare jhankāre.

Bahe susital bāe, kokil pancham gāe,  
 Rāwe āra nānā pakṣigaṇe;  
 Sune mriga kula bane, Gāila Barhu Candidāse  
 Bandhia Vāsuli carane.

#### IV. GERMINATION OF RENAISSANCE

**PREAMBLE:** Renaissance certainly is the fifteenth century movement not confined to Europe alone, but is a wave that decidedly swept over India also, with this fundamental difference that while the inspiration of this rebirth came to England or France, Italy or Germany, for instance, definitely from an alien land and more definitely from an alien literature of Greece and Rome, India was reborn in this movement like the phoenix of Western mythology from her own ashes, the *sanjīvanī* coming from a study of its own *Gītā* and *Upaniṣads*, in all its intellectual and emotional aspects. Again, while in Europe, Renaissance spoke differently in different countries, in Italy through senses and in Germany and England through a moral message, for example, this movement in India tried to speak in all different tongues in the form of neo-Vaiṣṇavism in particular.

Renaissance really is the successful Crusade against mediaevalism raging between the fourth and the sixteenth century through Europe and through India, stressing on the mortification of the flesh and spirit, divorcing beauty and joy from the scheme of things in life and world, advocating a moral and spiritual uplifting in theory, but enslaving the spirit itself in practice. Renaissance bearded the lion in his own den; and avowing emancipation of the spirit as its aim too, declared that it can be achieved not by killing the human instincts but by giving them a freer and nobler play. Hence this march against mediaevalism was not for turning all things upside down, but was for changing an attitude to life perverted, as it happened to be, to the ideals of Plato and Aristotle, Lucretius and Horace, in Greece and Rome, and of the *Gītā* and *Upaniṣads* in India.

To cite an extreme case, the Italian temperament of Renaissance, speaking decidedly through the senses, may be adjudged. Italian love poetry "however fevered or voluptuous" is not considered "gross or base", for it means no feasting of the senses by the fasting of the soul. The human body is the holy temple of the sacred Spirit, both likewise pure; and the senses are "sacramental emblems" of the Soul. So even if Italian poetry is pagan, it is yet Greek in spirit; and is sensuous, but never sensual. A parallelism of Italian temperament can be seen in Vaisṇavism of Bengal appealing more through senses than it does elsewhere. Hence such lines of the Bengali poet,

"Rūpa lāgi ākhi jhure, guṇe prāṇ bhor;  
Prati anga lāgi kāde prati anga mor:"

"Eyes pine for thy beauty, life is engrossed in thy qualities; every limb of mine craves indulgence of every limb of thine"—is considered sacred, not profane, for its appeal through the senses. So is the case with the following lines of Vidyāpati: the great Maithili poet, writing his songs through the influence of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism whence he was called Avinava Jayadeva:

"Janama avadhi hāma rūpa nehāranu  
Nayana na tirapita bhela;  
Lākha lākha yuga hia hia rākhanu  
Taio hia juraṇa na gela."

—"Since my birth I have viewed that beauty (form), eyes are not satisfied yet; for tens of millions of years repeated, did heart repose on heart, still the heart is not calmed." But when devoid of such background, one poet says: "Ah, how charming is the appearance of a cavity in her cheeks when she smiles like the Spring season. Tarry a little, invite not me to your Elysium; for I am already enslaved in her beauty:" it is profane undeniably.

Humanism is a prominent manifestation of Indian Renaissance also, as we find it laid under contribution in the very conception and selection of Kṛṣṇa as godhead. He is undoubtedly both human and divine as all human beings are apt to be, only if they choose. It is more a glorification of man than of God; and if of God really, it is definitely through man. The conception of Child God is undubiously to see God in every child, to see the divine in the human instincts against which mediaevalism made open conspiracy. It is a motif to mobilize all the powers of paternal and maternal instincts around every child of every father and mother, a child as an emblem of beauty and joy that mediaevalism sought to divorce; and thereby to raise men and women to the status of imaginary gods and goddesses in spite of themselves.

While this general aspect of Vaisnavite ascetism is sought to make the primary human instincts devote and dedicate themselves to the highest service of the Spirit, another, too dangerous to imitate, aspect of it made a desperate attempt to dedicate the body literally, even if wrongly, to the service of the Spirit, of course in the physical form of a substitute of the Invisible. This is the husband and wife relation brought into prominence through the Rādhā cult leading naturally to excesses with disastrous effects on society; Mahāpurusiyāism or Asam Vaisnavism is conspicuous by the absence of this Rādhā cult, although some brotherhoods or sisterhoods appear to have crept into it by the backdoor.

**DAWNING OF ASAM'S RENASCENCE:** The few figures that stand out in the dawn of Assamese renaissance are the translators of the Epics. While we cannot be sure when and how this tendency exactly came, there is no denying the fact that it definitely came about the beginning of the twelfth century. This is finally proved by the last copper plate of king Dharma Pal and supported by these renderings of the Epics. It does not seem however that any regular doctrine or philosophy of Vaisnavism was preached in ancient Assam before the middle of the fifteenth century when the first blossoms of the spring-time of Assamese renaissance began to unfold from their buds.

Hem Saraswati appears to be the earliest of these translators. His only work is *Prahlād Carita*, in the colophon of which he says:

Kamatā Mandala Dullabha Nārā(ya)ṇa  
Nripabara anupām;  
Tāhāna rājyata Rudra Sarasvati,  
Devajani kanyā nām.  
Tāhāna tanaya Hema Saraswati,  
Dhruvara anuja bhāi;  
Padavandhe tenho pracāra karilā  
Bāmana Purāṇa cāi. 61

'In Kamata Mandal (country) reigns the great king Durlabh Narayan. In his kingdom lived Rudra Saraswati with his wife Devajani. Their son is Hem Saraswati, the younger brother of Dhruva. He publishes this after consulting the Bāmana Purāṇa.'

So time and place of Hem Sarasswati are located once we know all about king Durlabh Narayan and his kingdom Kamatā; but this too is buried in heaps of traditions and legends. On this point all authorities bank on *Guru Carit* by Rāmcaran Thakur, a junior contemporary and nephew of Mādhawdew, of the sixteenth century, who besides giving genealogies of Durlabh Narayan details how the Bārabhuyāns with the forefathers of Śaṅkardew came to be settled in Assam (vs. 11-110ff). This king appears to be a contemporary of Landā Dew, the great ancestor of Śaṅkardew six generations ahead; and Landā Dew and other thirteen families of Brahmans and Kayasthas came to be settled in Assam only on a term of compromise between Durlabh and Dharma Pāl (Dharma Narayan) who were cousins (vs. 2527-29) and who styled themselves as Gaudeswar and Kāmeswar (v. 78 ff) respectively ruling in the western and eastern parts of Ratnapitha of the old Kamarupa kingdom between the Barnadi and the Karatoya (Neog's *Introduction to Assam*, pp. 63-66). Now, from epigraphic records, Dharma Pal's reign in the twelfth century is well established (*Ibid*, pp. 37-38), which must also be true of Durlabh. Again, Śaṅkardew's birth in 1449 is also firmly established; whence three hundred years have to be covered

by the six generations of Śaṅkardew's line one hundred years being covered by two generations against three generations which is the usual practice. This is accounted for by the fact that all the ancestors of Śaṅkardew had their sons at unusually late periods of their life as vividly described by the *Guru Carit*. So the dates of birth of the line of Śaṅkardew upwards may be taken as Śaṅkardew, 1449; Kusumbar, 1399; Suryabar, 1349; Rājadhār, 1299; Candibar, 1249; Landādev, 1199. Durlabh and Dharma Pāl must have been junior contemporaries of Landādev who was extremely old when he came to Asam with his son Candibar alias Devidās.

**HEM SARASWATI'S PRAHLAD CARIT:** Hem Saraswati introduces his father as Rudra Saraswati, who must not be confused with Rudra Kandali, (*Milan*, Vol. II, No. 1, p. 2), the poet of 'Sātyaki Prabes'. Saraswati is a literary title, and as such it may be seen that both the father and son were scholars. It is not precisely known what part of the kingdom he exactly hailed from, but naturally he may be taken as native of Kamatā which was bounded by the Barnadi on the east and by the Karatoya on the west, which included the modern districts of Kamarup, Goalpara, Kocbehar and Rangpur. The language of *Prahlād Carit* breathes an antiquity quite its own. Throughout the work we come across only one foreign word "nafar" and this too may have crept later through copyists; so it was written sometime before the Muhammadan invasion. The language in all its aspects show rather a Prakṛt influence than of Sanskrit; and in spelling there is a regular bias to use s even for ś and ṣ, and kh and ṣ are often interchanged as in the Buddhist songs. In regard to grammar, modern Assamese case-endings and tenses are more prominent than in the Caryas. Though comparatively a little crude in lucidity of expression and in vividness of description, in metre and rhythm and in excellence of literary style, it appears to be no unworthy predecessor of Śaṅkardew's *Prahlād Carit* included in the *Kīrttan* and composed about about three centuries later. There is much evidence of the poet's originality, vigour and poetic diction. Baffled in all his attempts to have Prahlad murdered, Hiraṇya-kasipu commanded his son once more to abuse Mādhawa, whence Prahlad mutters:—

"Hena suni Prahlāde sumare Hari Hari;  
Mādhawak gāli mai pāro kenekari.  
Mādhawese pitā-mātā Mādhawese prān;  
Mādhawat pare kon bandhu āche ān. 71  
Yata dekhā byāghra jal sthal giri ban;  
Gaja bhuja sawāte āchanta Nārāyaṇ.  
Tumi ami ādi kari tinio jagat;  
Savate āchanta Hari nuhika bekat." 72.



'Oh Hari, Oh Hari! How can I abuse Him? In Mādhawa we have our parents, in Mādhawa we have our life; who else than Mādhawa can be our friend? All lands and seas, all mountains and forests, all tigers, elephants and snakes (through the agency of which Prahlād's life was put at stake) are but vessels wherein Nārāyaṇ is contained. Not to speak of thee and me, Hari is pervading every particle in the three worlds; but is not revealed.' This adds fuel to the fire, and Hiranyakasipu bursts out once more:—

"Hiranyakasipu bole suna re barbar;  
Punarapi nindiloho tohor uttar.  
Bola je sawaro gāe āche Dāmodar;  
Sawe loke nohe kiya tāka samasar. 73  
Keho sukhi keho dukhi bahut antar;  
Keho kāk bāi keho karay nafar.  
Keho hasti-kāndhe care haṁsa-tuli soe;  
Keho keho jane kio trinak napāwe. 74  
Keho bhunje ghol keho (keho) bhunje khir;  
Keho je Srimanta hoye, keho hoye cor.  
Ekar jiwān hauk sawāre jiwān;  
Ekar marane hauk saware maran. 75  
Ekar bhojane hauk sawāre bhojan;  
Teve jāno sawate āchanta Nārāyaṇ....". 76

'Hear me, you fool, I condemn your reply once more. You say Dāmodar is in every being. Why then some are happy and others miserable, and a wide gulf divides them? Why then some rules over others and use them as their slaves? How is it that some are on elephants' backs, sleeping in precious beds, while others do not find even a couch of grass to lie on? How is it that some enjoy things that are denied to others, and some are endowed with celestial virtues while others become thieves? Let all live when one breathes, and let all die when one is dead; and let the hunger of all disappear when one has his feast; then and then alone one can realise that Nārāyaṇ pervades all beings.'

KAVI HARIHAR VIPRA: Harihar Vipra is another poet who refers to king Durlabh Narayan in high eulogy in his verse rendering of the Aswamedh Parva from the Sanskrit Mahābhārata.

"Jaya jaya nripabar Durlabh Nārān Rājā  
Kāmarūpe bhaila birabar;  
Saputra bāndhawe jewe sukhe rājya karantok  
Jiyontoka sahasra vatsar.  
Tahana rājyat thit sarvajana manonit  
Aswamedha pada madhye sar;  
Vipra Harihar kavi Harir caran sevi  
Padabandhe karilo pracār."

'Glory to king Durlabh Narayan who reigns in Kamatā. May he rule and live for a hundred years happily with his sons and friends. I who am poet Harihar Vipra, residing in his kingdom and prostrating at the feet of Hari, have composed and given publicity to this Aswamedh Parva, so approved by all.'

Thus it supports that Durlabh Narayan was a king of no negligible parts, and had indeed been a great patron of leaning. Verses of Harihar Vipra are flawless and beautiful, anticipating Sridhar Kandali, of the sixteenth century who also rendered the Aswamedh Parva into Assamese verse.

A variant of the text in the last but one line above reads as "Vipra Harihar Kavi, Gaurir caran sevi", giving "Gauri" (Pārvati or Durgā) for "Hari" (Kṛṣṇa) keeping rhyme and everything intact. Rendering of the Epics by itself does not guarantee that the poet must be a devotee of Hari: this is proved by the instance of Durgāvar who composed nice verses on the Ramayana, and Vidyapati Thakur of Mithila who wrote the immortal love-poems of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, and both were Śāktas by faith. So the variant with "Gauri" appears more probable, and insertion of "Hari" and Vaisnavite colophons may be considered as revision during Vaiṣṇava propaganda, if not later.

Of late an interesting attempt has been made to correct(?) the name as Harivar Vipra, on ground, number one, that it does not behove well to have the names of two Gods Hari and Hara in one name. This at least gives a handle for display of scholarship, if it be nothing else. Apart from the facts "Nahi Harih Harāt prthak" (Hari is not to be distinguished from Hara), and "Guṇa nāma yata Viṣṇu Śivara: Tāka bhinna vuddhi kare yi nara. Nāmara siyo mahā aparādhī: Narakata pare Daive nabādhī" (K.G., v. 49), that is, 'He who considers the attributes and names of Viṣṇu (Hari) and Siva (Hara) as separate is also a bad sinner against the name of God, and Fate cannot stop him from going to hell'. So in Asam itself we come across innumerable names as Harihar itself besides such other names, whether they are approved by present scholarship or not.

Ground number two is that two manuscripts now preserved in the Assam Museum at Gauhati contain a two-line colophon "Kṛṣṇar Kinkare Kahe Haribar Kavi: Pātak chārhok dāki bola Hari Hari." The last words 'Kavi' and 'Hari' in the two lines do not rhyme duly. It is doubted whether the poet was "Kṛṣṇar kinkar", that is 'slave' (devotee) of Kṛṣṇa at all. The third objection is serious and should be broadly discussed. One work on *Lava-Kuśar Yuddha* containing more than four hundred verses, printed earlier (by Bhatta-cārya Agency, Dibrugarh, 1925), has been published as "Ejan Mahā-kavir dvārā Asamīyā bhāṣāt racit", that is, 'composed in Assamese by a great poet'. Newer scholarships have found fault here in not inserting the name of "Harivar" as the poet. But the silence of the other party is more eloquent; there is no nomenclature of the poet on the book,

for no name of the poet was there inside the whole book of more than four hundred verses.

Now, the manuscripts mentioned contain the earlier printed work in its entirety, and something beyond. Very curiously enough, the portion of the manuscripts covering the earlier printed work also includes no name of the poet. It is only in the super-added, if not interpolated, portions that the above two-line colophon, even if defectively, makes its appearance, about once in one, and twice or thrice only in the other manuscript. It is evidently not a full-fledged colophon, like the one of Harihar Vipra found earlier and quoted above, which also suffers mutilation.

The *Vavru-vāh Parva* attributed to Harihar Vipra (published by Sivanath Bhattachārya, Dibrugarh, 2nd Ed., Jan. 1925) is a work on *Asvamedha Parva* complete in more than six hundred verses. It includes in *jhunā* metre the chorus "Jaya Hari Jaya Rām" and in *jhumuri* metre "najāni khorā dharilō: Var dukh laghu bhailō." These appear too modern, or at least too pro-Vaiṣṇavite, as also the style throughout. It does not smell the least archaism even compared with Hem Saraswatī whose contemporary Harihar had been. There seems also nothing to warrant the authorship of *Lava-Kuśa Yuddha* to be attributed to Harihar Vipra, the poet of the *Asvamedha parva*, as the two manuscripts betray themselves and suggest interpolation.

The only consistency of the two works *Vavruvāh* and *Lava-Kuśa* lie in their comparative pro-Vaiṣṇavite style, but that does not help to show that they are works of the same author. It is sad that there should be such confusion, but sadder that present study of them should make it worse confounded.

KAVIRATNA SARASWATĪ also mentions Durlab Narayan together with his son Indra Narayan, in introducing himself in his verse-rendering of Jayadrath Badh from the Sanskrit *Drona Parva* in the *Mahabharat*.

"Nrpa śiramaṇi Dewa mahāmaṇī  
Durlabha Nārāyaṇ rajā;  
pālilā satate Nite putrawate  
Prithivir yata prajā.  
Tāhāna tanay bhaila dharmamay  
Indra Nārāyaṇ dew;  
Mahābir dhīr svabhāwe gambhīr  
Nite krtya Hari sew.  
Chota śila nāme āche eka grām  
Yata grāmamadhye sār;  
Āchil tathā jagat prakhyāt  
Cakrapāni Sikdār.

Patu narabar kāyastha pravar  
 Dharmawanta mahāyaśi;  
 Pandit tilak kul-prakāśak  
 Niṣkalanka yen śaśi.  
 Tāhāna tanay ati śubhanay  
 Kaviratna Saraswati;  
 Droṇa Parva pad Jayadrath Badh  
 Kautuhale nigadati."

'King Durlabh Narayan who was like a venerable god and supreme among the kings, always ruled his people on earth affectionately as his own children. His son is the virtuous soul Indra Narayan, a great hero, grave and majestic in his nature and ever devoted to his performances in honour of Hari. (In his kingdom) there is a village, having the essence of all villages, Chotasilā by name. Here lived Cakrapāṇi Sikdar, illustrious over the world around him, an accomplished, virtuous and illustrious man and a supreme kāyastha. His son, Kaviratna Saraswati narrates Jaydratha Badh with curiosity as incorporated in the Drona Parva (of the Mahābhārata)." Kaviratna's poetic gifts also appear to be of no mean order like his scholarship, as is proved by the vividness of his descriptions and the smooth flow of different metres.

RUDRA KANDALI whose verse-rendering of Sātyaki Prabes' of Drona Parva, Mahabharata, has been preserved to us, refers to another king Tāmradhwaj and his royal brother, blessing them for their patronage.

"Śrīmanta Tāmradhwaja anuji sahite;  
 Briddhar samān dharma sisu bayasate.  
 Buddhit gambhir kshamāvanta subhanay;  
 Yāhār yasak sarva jane prasamasay.  
 Viṣṇur bhakat Mahāmāyār sewak;  
 Putrar samān kari daridra pālak.  
 Dui bhāir snehyen Rām Lakshmanar;  
 Savandhawe jiyantoka sahasra vatsar."

The learned compiler of the *Typical Selections of Assamese Literature* (published by the Calcutta University) places Rudra Kandali before Hem Saraswati, probably thinking Tāmradhwaj to be earlier than Durlabh. Such assumptions cannot be correct; for since Dharma Pal and Durlabh Nārāyaṇ were cousins and rivals, Dharma Pal's son Tamradhwaj, must be considered later than Durlabh Narayan; (R.C.T., vs. 90). Rudra Kandali's colophon just quoted, describing king Tamradhwaj as 'a devotee of Viṣṇu and a disciple of the goddess Mahāmāyā', a bundle of contradiction to all appearance, seems significant as suggesting the history of transition from Śāktism to Vaiṣṇavism about this time. Variants of colophons of Babrubāh Parva by Harihar Vipra as "Harir caraṇ sevi", "Gaurir caraṇ sevi", etc. are also not to be neglected in this consideration. Rudra Kandali's style and language are finer and verses definitely smoother than those of Hem Saraswati.

## V. MAHĀMĀNIKYA'S PATRONAGE

Mādhawa Kandalī was undoubtedly the brightest of the bright band of stars that illumined the literary horizon of Asam and shone as the Morning Star declaring the advent of the Phoebus that was Śaṅkardew himself. Curiously enough, the only clue in regard to his own life and to that of his great patron is contained only in his two verses in the Lankā kāṇḍa of his rendering of the Sanskrit Rāmāyaṇ.

"Kavirāj Kandalī ye           āmākese buliyay  
                                     Karilōho sarvajana bodhe;  
 Rāmāyaṇa supayār           Śrī Mahā Māṇikya ye  
                                     Baraha rajār anurodhe. 23  
 Sāt Kāṇḍa Rāmāyaṇ           padavandhe nivandhilō  
                                     Lambhā parihāri sārodhṛta;  
 Mahā Māṇikyar bole           Kāvya-ras kichu dilō;  
                                     Dugdhaka mathile yena ghṛta". 24

'It is me who am called the king of poets of the Kandalis; for knowledge of the mass people and at the request of the Barāh King Śrī Mahā Māṇikya, I have rendered the fine verses of the Rāmāyaṇa extracting the essence and leaving off the details, like the ghee procured by churning the milk. I have of course added some kāvya-rasa at the instance of Mahā Māṇikya". But these verses of autobiographical reference are given differently (Bāhi, Vol. XVIII, No. 5, p. 215; Asamiyā Sāhityar Cāneki, Vol. I, p. 166), betraying interpolation:

"Kavirāj Kandalī ye           āmākese buli kay  
                                     Mādhawa Kandalī āro nam;  
 Sapone sacite mai           jnan-kai-vākya-mane  
                                     Aharnīse cinto Rām Rām.  
 Sloka Sanskritat āmi           garhibāk pāri cay,  
                                     Karilōho sarvajana bodhe;  
 Rāmāyaṇa supayār           Śrī Mahā Māṇikya ye  
                                     Barāhi rajār anurodhe. 1885  
 Sāt Kāṇḍa Rāmāyaṇ           padabandhe nivandhilō  
                                     Lambhā pārihari sārodhṛta;  
 Mahā Māṇikyar bole-Kāvya-ras kichu dilō  
                                     Dugdha mathanat yena ghṛt."

The first scholar to have edited and published in 1899 this Assamese version of the Ramayana and to attempt to ascertain the time and place of this great poet and his patron, is Mādhawcandra Bardalai. In his learned preface, he came to the conclusion that Mahāmāṇikya must have been a Kacāri king, for kings of this line ruled in between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries styling themselves as Barāhi kings (?) and their kingdom extending up to Jayantapur which then embraced Āli

Pukhuri in Nagāo, Asam, undoubtedly the place of the poet's birth and the time of this great patron of Mādhaw Kandali is calculated at some time about the first half of the fourteenth century.

**THE BARAHI TRIBE:** This is plausible but not however quite free from defects. The first objection is that in the stone inscriptions, copper-plates and other documents these Barho or Kacāri kings appear to have styled themselves as Hāriharmbeswar, Herhambādhisa, Hairham-bapati etc; and nowhere have they been seen to call themselves Barāhi. On the other hand, the two last kings of the Kāmarūpa Pala dynasty, namely Indrapāl and Dharmapāl have used the title of Baraha or Śrī Bārāha for the first time, and the eastern portion of Kamarupa, the Kapili Valley, for example, was ruled by different descendants of the old Pala kings or by their powerful chiefs. In one stone inscription, now preserved in the Assam Provincial Museum and found in the pillar of an ancient temple in a place called Gachtal near Davaka, it is written in what is some-what like old Gupta character that the temple was built in 1145 Śaka (i.e. 1223 A.D.) for Brisabha Vāhana by orders of king Viśwa Sundar. (Mādhaw Kandali āru Barāh Rājā, *Asam Sāhitya Sabhā Patrikā*, Vol. X, 71-79). These instances are cited to prove that Mahamanikya or Mahamāṇi Fā must have been a Pāla king who ruled in the thirteenth century, after Viśwa Sundara. The argument, and the only argument on which this opposition feels itself fortified, is that the Pala kings alone wrote the title of Bārāha and were justified in doing so for the reason, or fancy, that they are, as now styled by modern historians, really 'Bhauma Pāl,' the first part of this word being derived from Bhūmi. (Earth), who in her turn had conjugal union with Barāha for the origin of the line of Naraka.

This too appears far-fetched and fanciful, for, as a matter of fact, all kings are Bhūmipāl, Bhūpāl or Bhūpati since they rule over certain portions of the earth, and as such may show their connection with Barāha. Even the Swedish kings of Europe are said to have claimed their descent from such an imaginary union of Earth and Barāha. So it is simply natural that more than one dynasty of rulers succeeding Narakāsur should claim their descent from his line and as such be called Barāhi. Devendranāth Bezbarua (A.B.S.B., pp. 92-94) gives another suggestion saying that since there were several Jayantia kings having the title of Māṇik e.g. Vijay Māṇik (1564-80), Dhan Māṇik (1596-1605) and Yas Māṇik (1605-25), Mahāmāṇikya might be one of these Jayantiā kings. This is not supported by facts, since the chronology of the kings of this line starting with Parvat Rāi (1500-16) begin only the sixteenth century (Gait, p. 261).

There is another king of the name of Mahāmāṇikya in the line of the Tripura kings. One prince Ratna-Fā (1260? 1282-1366) is said to have purchased the title of Māṇikya in 1282 A.D. from Sultan Tugral Khan by presenting him a valuable gem (maṇi). So he became Ratna Māṇikya who was succeeded by Pratāp Māṇikya and Mukut Māṇikya (brothers) respectively. Then came Mahāmāṇikya (1396-1406?-1431?) who was succeeded by his son Dharma Māṇikya in whose reign two Assamese scholars, Śukreswar and Vāṇeswar by name, wrote the Tripura Rajmālā; If this be so, it may not be impossible that the Tripura king, Mahāmāṇikya might be the patron of Mādhaw Kandali in the latter half of the fourteenth century. ("The Ancient kingdom of Tripura in the Kapili Valley"). There is no denying the fact that there was an independent tribe called the Barāhis, like the Marāṇs. Sir Gait distinctly refers to the Barāhis whom Sukāfā in the early thirteenth century could subdue not by force, but by friendship. Neither the Kacharis nor any other tribe of Assam is known to be called as such.

**MADHAW KANDALI'S TIME:** That Mādhaw Kandali was senior to Śaṅkardew by about a hundred years has no denying. There is also little doubt that only five *kāṇḍas* of his rendering of the Rāmāyaṇa have been extant. The Ādi and Uttarā Kāṇḍas might not be written at all, or if written were surely lost before the time of Śaṅkardew. The Vaiṣṇavite colophons were posthumous, to be sure, in Mādhaw Kandali's work, also probably in those of Hem Saraswati, Harihar, Kaviratna and other predecessors of Śaṅkardew. The *Kathā-Guru-Carit* of seventeenth century refers to Mādhaw Kandali, probably this poet, in connection with his disciple Rāghaw Ācārya who met Mahendra Kandali the school-master of Śaṅkardew (p. 26). It also states significantly that as Ananta Kandali was preparing a Vaiṣṇavite version of the Rāmāyaṇa, Mādhaw Kandali appeared before Śaṅkardew in a dream to request not to allow him to be buried in oblivion. So Śaṅkardew took up the rendering of the Uttarā Kāṇḍa while Mādhawdew translated the Ādi Kāṇḍa; and so Mādhaw Kandali's work was restored (p. 119). Both Śaṅkardew Mādhawdew paid high tribute to Mādhaw Kandali's poetic genius in their respective renderings of the Rāmāyaṇa (ch. xix, v. 6 and ch. xxv, v. 15).

The *Kathā-Guru-Carit* also clearly states the rendering of Mādhaw Kandali concluded the chapters as "Śubha, Śubha"; it is Mādhawdew who enhanced the worth of his work by inserting the embroidery work of the Vaiṣṇavite colophons (p. 119); and this could have been the case with the works of other earlier poets where the "embroidery" might be inserted by other Vaiṣṇavite hands at much later dates. That the renderings of the Epics in themselves could not prove a Vaiṣṇavite motive is



a fact which is corroborated by the justification given by Ananta Kandali (Ayodhyā Kānda, vs. 13-14) about the compilation of his version of Rāmāyaṇa in the face of Mādhaw Kandali's work:

Mādhawa Kandali viracilā Rāmāyaṇ:  
Tāka śuni āmāra ākula kare man.  
Rāmar sāmānya santa kathā yathāwat:  
Bhajaniya guṇa yata nabhaila vekat.  
Eteka yatana karō bhakatir pade,  
Nubulibā nindā sadā śunā sabhāsade.

'Mādhaw Kandali had rendered the Rāmāyaṇa. On hearing his verses I do not feel comfortable. The saintly character of Rāma is there, but the deep devotional merits are not expressed. Hence I make this effort to express the *bhakti* side of it. Let not the learned censure, but let them hear it attentively.' This must serve as a general warning to all who are inclined to believe these earlier works as thoroughly Vaiṣṇavite in original. Sonārām Caudhāri, an early research scholar, in a comparative study of the Assamese, Bengali and Sanskrit versions of the Rāmāyaṇa (*Bāhi*, Śāon, 1851 Śak) hinted that while Mādhaw Kandali was faithful to its original in Sanskrit, a few very minor facts as killing of Kālanemi, and Sita being attacked by a crow, are not found in Vālmiki. Singing of the Rāmāyaṇa songs by Lava and Kuśa given in the Ādi Kāṇḍa in Sanskrit is fittingly described in the Uttara Kāṇḍa in Assamese, and the friendship contracted by Vibhiṣaṇa with Rāma, given in the Lankā Kāṇḍa in Sanskrit is described in the Sundara Kāṇḍa by Mādhaw Kandali. Some of such innovations of the Assamese version are found in the Bengali version of Kṛttivās coming about two centuries later; but they are not all. Himself confessing "Nāhike eseva kathā Vālmiki racane," 'these things are not there in Vālmiki's work', Kṛttivās fashions Rāma, Sītā, and events in his own way so that they are no more of themselves. It is because Kṛttivās was not a scholar, and he rather heard than read Vālmiki; and even then followed his own fancy and cheap popularity. The Hindi version (v. 1576) of Tulsidas, also far Junior to Mādhaw Kandali's, was different in similar manner.

TRANSLATIONS OF THE RAMAYANA: The Rāmāyaṇa appears to be the earliest Indian work finding ardent admirers abroad, the current not yet stopping. Jules Bloch writes (*la Paris* 2-2-'51) not only of an early short Tibetan version and a lot of Indo-Chinese and Yavanese versions, but also of one thesis on Tulsidas's version being presented by Melle Vandeville at Paris. The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmiki is said to have consisted of five Kāṇḍas originally, and the Ādi and the Uttara Kāṇḍa are said to be supplemented by others later, whence, probably, one finds

both Mādhaw Kandali and Ananta Kandali writing five Kāṇḍas each, which may not be regarded as accidental. Any way, Mādhaw Kandali's Rāmāyaṇa is a great contribution to modern Indian languages in general and to Asamīyā in particular. It is not known why Śaṅkardew makes no mention of Hem Saraswati and others, but his respectful reference to Mādhaw Kandali is one of point: "Pūrva kavi apramādi, Mādhaw Kandali ādi, tēhe viracila Rāma kathā". Besides this, Mādhaw Kandali's metres and descriptions, poetic diction and vocabulary appear to be a splendid specimen to his successors. It also offers sufficient suggestions in regard to pre-Śaṅkarite Assamese social life, manners and customs, rites and ceremonies.

Mādhaw Kandali's version appears to be the earliest regular rendering of Vālmiki into a modern north-Indian language by the fourteenth century. It is more of the nature of a faithful synopsis than of a literal translation from the Sanskrit; and the poet has the courage to challenge that it has nowhere deviated from the original (*Lankā Kāṇḍa*, Ch. LVI, v. 25). He begins with the *Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa* starting with the occasion of Rāma's re-entrance into Ayodhya in the company of Sita as also his exit on exile; and concluding with his refusal to return to the capital before the expiry of the period of exile. His second book, *Āraṇya Kāṇḍa* begins with Rāma's entrance into the forest of Dandaka and concludes with his despair after the rape of Sita. The third book, *Kiṣkindhyā Kāṇḍa* starts with Rāma's meeting with Sugrīva and concludes with the mobilisation of the army of the monkeys. The fourth book *Sundara Kāṇḍa* begins with Hanumanta's journey to Lankā and concludes with Bibhiṣan's contacting Rāma. The fifth and the last book of Mādhaw Kandali is the *Lankā Kāṇḍa* which begins with Sara-mā's sympathy with Sita, concludes with the ordeal of Sita and coronation of Rāma at Ayodhyā.

AN ASAMĪYĀ CHAUCER: The poet uses mainly *pada* or *payār* and *dulari* or *tripadi*, *chabi* and *jhumuri* metres as vehicles of his thoughts, and his rhyming is worthy of a great forerunner of Śaṅkardew. In his first book alone ample instances of archaism show him even so older than Hem Saraswati, while, side by side in the same book we come across certain modernisms suggesting copyists' carelessness. Despite this apparent contradiction, the style of the poet is consistently forceful and beautiful, and one cannot miss the exquisite literary beauty of Mādhaw Kandali's style for which we are tempted to call him an Assamese Chaucer, comparing the brilliant literary merit of this writer with that of his great contemporary in English literature. Mādhaw Kandali was certainly a great master of the art of poetry and had the

gift of speaking volumes with just a few words. He concluded description of Ayodhya on the eve of Rāma's coronation with the lines (*Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa*, Ch. III, vs. 75):—

“Hāso hāso kare purī Ayodhyā samprati;  
Nritya-gīta-vādye jen dekhi Amrāwati”.

“The city of Ayodhya is now almost smiling. With dances, songs and musical instruments in action it has the appearance of Elysium’. In insinuating Kaikeyī, against Rāma's coronation, Mantharā, her maid, says—

“Daśarath sāgar tarangī nadī tai;  
Alapate śukāi jāibi jāniloho mai. 26.  
Priyā Gangā Kauśalyā gambhīra bege bahe;  
Rām abhiśeka bekat kari kahe”. 27.

“Daśarath is the sea and you are a shallow river. I am sure you are soon going to dry up. Kauśalyā is his dear Gangā that flows so fast and deep; and it is declared by the (preparation of) Coronation of Rām’.

M. K.'s DESCRIPTIVE GRANDEUR: Mādhaw Kandali's physical delineations of Sītā (Ch. XII) even remind the descriptions of herself and of other heroines as given by Śaṅkardew in his *kāvya*s and especially in the songs of his dramas such as *Rām Vijay* and *Rukmiṇī Haran*:

“Hara-kopa bahni porhe khuji napāi jur;  
Nābhi sarobare Kāmdewe dilā bur. 8.  
Nij pur paśi Kāme mudaila duār;  
Udarar loma pānti dhūm bhaila tār.” 9.  
“Amritar kūpa sama Manmathar pur;  
Saras jaghan tor prakāse prachur.” 11.

‘Being burnt by the fire of wrath of Hara and finding no solace elsewhere, Cupid had a dive in the lake that is (Sītā's) navel. Finding himself in his own city by the immersion, Cupid shut the door; and the smoke appeared in the form of hair in her abdomen.....The city of Cupid is a mine of ambrosia, and your interesting hip and loin exhibit so nicely’.

On Rāma's proposal to leave her in the capital, Sītā observes (Ch. XII, vs. 24-25):—

“Campak kalikā yen mor kalewar;  
Lundi ghundi āchilāhā jehena bhramar.  
Jeve āsi bikasit pāila phal phul;  
Upabhog eri kene karāhā nisfal.”

‘My body had been like the Campaka bud, and you had been enjoying it like a blackbee. Now when it is blossoming and going to bear fruits, why do you stop enjoyment and make me fruitless?’

“Kamana angat mok hīn dekhilanta;” v. 29 reminds “Kona ange khun dekhi nālā Jadumani” so often quoted by the biographers of Śaṅkardew, as a line from un-Vaiṣṇavite Pītāmbhar Dvija.

Like his description of Ayodhyā he also describes Lankā with a brevity quite befitting a master artist. In the Sundara Kāṇḍa we find:

“Bāray Basante bahe bao;  
Saḍa ṛitu nacāray kokilar rāo...19.  
Godhulikā belā Śrī dekhilā Lankār;  
Duti Amrāvati jena jagatate sār.” 25.

‘In the Spring-time which is there for twelve months, the breeze flows gently. During the six seasons, the cuckoo never ceases cooing.’ In the evening time (Hanumān) saw the beauty of Lankā. It was like the divine Elysium and the very essence of the world’ Then the poet describes the social life of Lankā, through Hanumān, what customs its inhabitants practise, what enjoyments they make and what games they play. The description is vivid and life-like, and seems indirectly to hold a mirror up to the then social life (Ch. VIII).

M. K.’s CHARACTERISATION: Hand in hand with the artistic excellence, the national element in his composition occurs no less. When Rām and his four brothers re-entered Ayodhyā with their wives, women of the city were charmed by Rām’s divine appearance and they whispered the common confession to one another (Ch. I):—

Rāma-mukha padma mor nayan bhramar;  
Vārīte napārō bhog kare nirantar. 26.

‘Rām’s face is the lotus and my eyes are blackbees. I cannot stop them; they enjoy incessantly’.

“Rām Sītā āgaman dekhi sarvaloke;  
Thāne thāne uruli pāray jhoka-jhoke”. 29.  
“Thāpilanta gṛhat suvarṇamay ghat;  
Kanyā sawe pānila bātāt neta pat.” 39.

‘Seeing Rām and Sītā come, all women-folk made the auspicious sound time and again in different places’ ‘Gold pots (filled with water) were placed in the house, and the women laid silk cloths on the street.’ The national element is distinctly felt in idioms and colloquial expressions, which are almost untranslatable.

The poet appears to have a great like for description and simile. Charms of solitude are described as having greatly enhanced Rāma’s feeling of conjugal love. (Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa, Ch. XX, vs. 74-81). This amorous interpretation of nature exactly coincides with the imageries of Meghaduta (Pūrva Megha, 18, 53 ff.). Mādhaw Kandali’s descriptions of his heroines are vivid and varied. They have the classical dignity and grandeur and are clear-cut like pieces of Greek sculpture; for instance, in the *Āraṇya Kāṇḍa*, we have such descriptions of Urmilā (Ch. I, vs. 96-106) and of Sītā, by Rāvaṇa (Ch. XII, vs. 69-85).

Mādhaw Kandali acquaints himself also as a great master in snapping and analysing exact situations. One of the many such instances may be seen when Rām was just going on exile and Daśarath, even for whose word of honour he was doing so, was at the same time preventing. (*Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa*, Ch. XVI):—

“Sumantra Mantrik bulilanta Rāme,  
 ‘Śighre rath khān dāk’;  
 ‘Sunare Sumantra Nādākibi rath’,  
 Daśarath denta hāk. 16.  
 ‘Najā, thāk, thāk’, ‘Dāk, dāk, dāk’  
 Uthalil dui rol;  
 Sumantra mantrīr man dodhe bhaila  
 Karay citta andol”. 17.

“Rām ordered the minister, Sumantra—‘Drive the chariot immediately’. ‘Hear me, Sumantra, drive not the chariot’, prevented Dasarath. ‘Stay, stay, stay,’ and ‘Drive, drive, drive,’ were the opposite sounds that resounded. The minister, Sumantra, was on the two horns of the dilemma and his mind was so perturbed’.

Mādhaw Kandali depicts Rām nothing short of an ideal man. When Bhārat with his attendants met Rām in the forest and entreated him in all earnestness to come back to, and be crowned a king in, the city of Ayodhyā, and even offered to be his substitute as an exile if needs be, Rām thus replied. (*Ayodhya Kāṇḍa*, Ch. XL, vs. 1-13):

‘Rām addressed them all with a resolute mind—‘Oh, what for you all people take this interest in me. (Seeing that) life is fleeting like a bubble of water, why should I break my father’s word of honour? The jewels among monarchs whom once the world adored have ended one by one like the water of the tide. One who has not seen them and has simply heard of them, may or may not believe in their existence... .Inevitable death absorbs all even as the rain water is drunk by the rays of the sun. The beams of the full moon are lost and the waters of the seven seas are dried off. The seven worlds including the underground regions cannot stand (in the long run); the Poles and the mountains including the Mandara must some day tumble down. The sun with the planets will fall; still I will not leave my father’s word of honour. Even if my life be at stake, I will not forego, be sure and certain; and do go back, O Bhārat, to Ayodhyā’.

Similarly Sītā has been depicted by Mādhaw Kandali as an ideal of womanhood. When Rāvaṇa first offered to take her away, Sītā, now all alone in the wide forest, made this spirited reply: (*Aranya Kāṇḍa*, Ch. XIII):—

“Hāo re Rāvaṇa barbar niśācar;  
 Avilambe jāibāka cāhā Yama ghar. 24.  
 Rāmar gharinī mok bhājibāka cāsa;  
 Maribāka lāgi kālcuta biṣa khāsa. 25.....

Huyā jui āngani candrak dhār desa;  
 Jvalanta agnik betā bastre bāndhi nesa. 27....  
 Sīmhar bhārjyāk śrigālar abhilāṣ;  
 Śānti Sītā mok tai bhajibāka cās. 33....  
 Giri-nadi-samudre antar howe yata;  
 Rām Dewe tohor dekhay sehi mata. 36.....  
 Svapne jnāne mane Rāghawat drirha kāyā;  
 Carane nuchuibo par puruṣar chāyā. 40.

'O thou barbarous demon, Rāvaṇa? Dost thou intend to meet Death forthwith. Me who am Rāma's wife thou meanest to embrace which amounts to thy preferring death by taking the deadliest poison. Being an ordinary flame of fire thou dost venture to lend thy light to the Moon; and thou darest carrying a blazing fire binding it in thy cloth... Me who am the great chaste woman, thou wantest to embrace, which fact is equivalent to a jackal desiring for a lioness.... You differ from Rām in the same way as rivers rising from mountains differ from seas.....? What in dream and what in consciousness and mind. I am strictly faithful to Rām; and will not suffer the touch of the shadow of another person even with my feet.'

**AUTHORSHIP OF DEVAJIT:** Mādhaw Kandali is credited with the authorship another work *Dewajit* (Defeat of gods). The subject is briefly as follows. Indra, the God of heaven, made preparation for a great sacrifice to which Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva, the Hindu Trinity, were invited. The great ascetic Narad, suggested that Krishna should be the main Deity to be worshipped in this sacrifice. This Indra refused to do and abused Krishna instead. Then ensued a quarrel between Indra and Arjuna, and Śiva stood against the latter to defend the former. An unprecedented fight ensued in which Arjuna, helped by Krishna, became victorious. Advantage of this result has been taken to show why we should pay homage to Kṛṣṇa and recite his name. This work, conspicuous by the absence of any colophon of Madhaw Kandali, and without having any reference to it elsewhere, appears to be a pro-Vaiṣṇavite work of some other writer.

## BOOK FOUR

### BLOSSOMS OF RENASCENCE IN ASAMIYA LITERATURE

#### 1. THE PRELIMINARY FACTS OF THE PERIOD

**HISTORICAL SURVEY:** This period synchronises with the rise of the Lody dynasty (1458-1526) and terminates with the reign of Shah-Jahan (1627-58) passing through the days of such Mughal Emperors as Akbar the Great (1556-1605) of Indian history. In the history of Assam itself, it covers the reigns of as many as ten Ahom kings beginning and ending with Susenfa (1439-88) and Sutatula (1648-63), and sees the rises and falls of about half a dozen dynasties as the Khena, Koc, Chutiyā and Kachāris with such representative great kings as Nilambar (1455-98), Nara-Nārāyan (1540-84), Nitipāl (C. 1523) and Detsung (1535-36) respectively, and witnesses about ten Muhammadan invasions repulsed. The frustration of the first four Muhammadan invasions took place in 1206, 1226, 1257 and 1337 while in the fifth the kingdom of Kamata was totally annihilated in 1498 by a treacherous plot of Hussain Shah who was really defeated. Any way, the Muhammadan hold over this part of Kamarupa did not last beyond 1502, and like the phoenix of European mythology the great Koc power came into being from the very ashes of the fall of Kamata with the rise of Viswa-Simha (1515-40) and of course ending with Prāṇ Nārāyan (1633-66). Meanwhile the Tāi invaders started the consolidation of their fast growing Ahom empire from the east by absorbing all other powers as the Marāns, Muttaks, Chutiyās and Bārabhuyās, one by one. The great power they were now encountering was the Kachāris whom they pushed to the west of the Dikhau and then of the Dhansiri, and compelled them to change their capital from Dimāpur to Maibong. So in the sixth, seventh and eighth invasions of Assam in 1527, 1531 and 1537 respectively, the Muhammadans encountered the rising Ahom imperialists for the first time, beginning with the Suhung-mung or Dihingiyā Rājā (1497-1539). In the invasion of 1527, Bit Malik, the Muhammadan commander, was killed at Khāgarījan (Nagāo) and horses, cannons and guns were captured in large number from the Muhammadan fugitives. In April, 1532, Muhammadan generals, Turbak and Hussain Khan, were put to death, and elephants and horses, numbering nearly a thousand, cannons and matchlocks, gold, silver and other booties and Muhammadan captives were secured (*Riyazus Salatin*); and use of fire in army by the Ahoms appears to date from this war. To quote Tavernier (London, 1678, Pt. ii,



Bk. iii, p. 187): "It is thought that these were the people that formerly invented gun-powder, which spread itself from Assam to Pegu, and from Pegu to China, from where the invention has been attributed to the Chinese. However, certain it is that Mirjumla brought from thence several pieces of cannons which were all iron guns, and store of excellent powder both made in the country. The powder is round and small like ours, and of excellent quality." The ninth, tenth, eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth Muhammadan invasions took place in 1568, 1615, 1617, twice in 1635 and in 1637, and were repulsed. But besides these there were no few civil wars of the Ahoms not only with the Kacharis and other powers whom they subjugated with great difficulties, but with the Koces who were grown in the zenith of their power in the west of the old Kamrupa kingdom, under their king Nara-Narayan (1540-84) and his general Śukladhvaj or Cilārāi, the royal brother. The Ahoms and the Koces met their common foes, the Muhammadans, the latter at last succumbed owing to domestic quarrels in the royal families and the former survived and concluded treaty in 1638. (Neog's *Introduction*, pp. 67-108). Confirmation of these results is found in Padishah Nama and Bahasistan-i-Ghaibi.

**SOCIAL BACKGROUND:** The two great Sanskrit Works, *Kālikā Purāṇ* and *Yoginī Tantra*, by themselves, tell us nearly half the story of the Assam on the social sides as on the political. It was apparently a period of strain and stress; inwardly it was a formative and synthetic period of the society, as of the country, where consolidation of the Ahom empire was vigorously at work, absorbing all petty kings and kingdoms. We do not exactly know what form of religion the Ahoms themselves had, but we know that at least the Chutiyās and Bāra Bhuyās were staunch Śākti worshippers. The Kecāikhātī copper Temple or the Eastern Kāmakhya, as Buchanan significantly names it, remained a shrine of human sacrifice till after the fall of the Chutiyā kingdom, and the Deories were allowed to continue their ghastly rites. The victim chosen for the purpose had the liberty or license to behave in any way he pleased till this notorious moment came, and one can easily guess for oneself the horrible state of such a society (H.A., p. 42). Muhammadan chroniclers, as the author of *Ain-i-Akbari*, are fully in accord when they describe such state of things. They finally find their confirmation and culmination in the *Kālikā Purāṇa* and *Yoginī Tantra* which show that the process of fermentation and synthesis of the various non-Aryan practices was all but complete in an Aryanised Hindu form of worship in these works. Horrible injunctions connected with flesh, wine and woman have been narrated (Ch. LXXIV, vs. 205-11) and even human sacrifice is clearly enjoined and detailed (Ch. LXVI, v. 91) in the *Kālikā Purāṇa*. The sixth Patala of

*Yoginī Tantra* dwelling on Vira Yoga, enjoins that a maid of sixteen with particular reference to some parts of her body, should be the object of meditation (v. 3), and frankly declares that fish and flesh, wine and woman are not brutal enjoyments to be sure (v. 14). It is then described what wine and what woman are most suitable for drink and coition respectively (vs. 35-40) and goes to the extent of saying "Māṭṛ yonim paritayajya maithunam sarvayoniṣ" (v. 44) and "dvadaśābdādika yoniryāvat ṣaṣṭhī prajāyate: Tābattu maithunam tasyāt svyambhuva" (v. 45). Of course the chapter is concluded by interpreting that coition here means union of souls: "Parasaktyātma-samyogo na vīrye maithunam matam" (v. 73). Debased forms of Buddhism also infected the Assamese society and helped irreligion to pass in the name of religion. As the hottest and driest weather anticipates a cool breeze or a swgēt shower, so this state of Assamese society naturally anticipated Śaṅkardew, with his plain and simple doctrine of *Eka Śaraṇ* (Self surrender to the One) and *Nām Dharma* (Religion of Singing the Glory of the One), and laying premium on *Ātma-Śuddhi* (Self-Purification) mainly, and divorcing all forms of worship to any god on goddess save the One. Natural enough that, like the thirsty dust drinking the ambrosial rain to saturation, the mass should welcome this *Bhakti Dharma* (Religion of love) with all their hearts. It is perhaps natural, at the same time, that the interested and privileged classes should view it with animosity and hatred.

**REVIVAL OF LEARNING:** This period under review also synchronises with the Age of Renaissance (1400-1550) and the Elizabethan period (1550-1620) and the Puritan Age (1620-1660) of English literature, taken together. Curious enough, Assamese literature of this period, reveals almost all the main characteristic and prominent traits of these three periods of English literature. Firstly like the age of English Renaissance it is "the most volcanic period" in the history of Assam, when "man discovered himself and the universe," had "suddenly opened his eyes and seen", Orthodoxy or old authority received a death-blow, for Truth was now the only authority; people became curious, for a new intellectual horizon opened before their eyes. Secondly, like the glorious Elizabethan period of English literature, it was in Assamese literature too "an age of great thought and great action" and "marked by a strong national spirit, by patriotism, by religious literature, by social content, by intellectual progress and by unbounded enthusiasim". Like the Elizabethan age too, it is "essentially an age of poetry", with the additional glories of the invention of the Assamese drama and Assamese prose. Thirdly, like the Puritan move-

ment in England the Vaiṣṇavite Age may be considered as "a rebirth of the moral nature of man following the intellectual awakening" or "the greatest moral . . . reform which ever swept over a nation". This becomes self-evident when we remember that an open-heart and open-door policy was adopted to effect the great reform; liberty, equality and fraternity, not of outward or political nature, but of a thorough spiritual plane, were the watch-words of the movement; and above all, complete self-surrender to the One, through self-purification, was its goal. The Vaiṣṇavite Assamese literature, inconceivably voluminous, had of course a marked unity in spirit, even better than the Elizabethan literature of England; and while it was classical in form, to be sure, it was intensely romantic in spirit, certainly throbbing with "youth, hope and vitality" like the Elizabethan English literature. This great era of hope and love dawned on Asam with the birth of Śaṅkardew, as in magic, and all illusions vanished like the nightmare. The nation felt "bhidyate hridaya-granthih, cidyante sarva-saṃ sayāh". All doubts and all misgivings were gone, and Asam awoke, like England of Elizabeth's reign, to quote Milton "a noble puissant nation, rousing herself, like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks". Apparently there seems to be a great fundamental difference between the Vaiṣṇavite movement of Asam and the age of Elizabeth in England, namely, that the former was religious and the latter secular, and they are diametrically opposite in nature, hence the former should have hindered rather than helped the secular progress of the country. But, in fact, the great Vaiṣṇavite movement of Śaṅkardew indeed achieved the material progress even without having a material tendency. Nor is this to be wondered at. Tides of all true religions leave the soil always decidedly more fertile for the luxuriant growth of even secular seeds. Freed from the fetters of the senses, relieved of the usurpation of matter, the soul can display wonders in fields spiritual and temporal. So it had been; it removed the canker that used to sap the vitality of the nation, thus rendering it possible for the two young nations Ahoms and the Koces, on the east and west, that outwardly vied each other but inwardly combined, to give rebirth to the Assamese nation and Assamese culture as a whole.

## II. LINGERING MEDIAEVAL SONGS AND EPICS

EPICS ON SNAKE-WORSHIP. MANKAR appears to be the earliest of the Manasā poets of Asam. Very little is known about him save that he was the grandson of one Dhekeria and a native of Jalpaiguri, as the colophon assigned to a song by him maintains. It further refers to the

kingdom of Kamatā and its king Jalpeswar — "Kamatār rājā vando, Rājā Jalpeswar." There are continuous epigraphic records till the reign of Dharma Pal about the middle of the twelfth century. From the biographies of Śaṅkardew we learn that the kingdom of Kamarupa, at least in the west, broke into pieces even during this reign, a part in Gauḍa having been ruled by his own cousin Durlabh Narayan, calling himself Gaudeswar, and the part to his immediate east being ruled by Dharma Pal, styling himself as Kāmeswar. Different reasons are assigned by the biographies and traditions, but there seems no doubt that Dharma Pal abdicated his throne abruptly. In the biographies of Śaṅkardew we find the name of Tamradhwaj as a son of Dharma Pal and in the autobiographical note of one pre-Vaiṣṇavite poet we find Tamradhwaj a ruler. So also we find in the autobiographical note of another pre-Vaiṣṇavite poet the name of Indra Narayan as the son of Durlabh Narayan. But we hear of no kings in history till 1204 when king Niladhvaj came to the throne. The last king of this line is known to be Nilambar who ruled in 1455, the next historical fact being the fall of the kingdom of Kamata in 1498 by the treachery of Hussain Shah, and then again the rise of the Koch kingdom in 1515 under Viswa Siṃha, from which time we have a perfectly connected account of the country. So any Jalpeswar, ruler of Jalpaiguri, can only be placed either between 1150-1204 or between 1498-1515. This is to say that there is no other alternative than to think that Jalpeswar, the patron of Mankar, ruled either before the rise of the Khena dynasty or after the fall of kingdom of Kamata. From the political as well as social circumstances, as also from the internal evidence of the language of the few songs of Mankar still extant to his credit, we assign him to the latter date, that is, to the close of the fifteenth century. He composed verses from the Padma Purana mainly, on the theme of Behula. He does not appear to be so great or popular a poet.

POET DURGABAR: The next singer of the Padmā Purāṇ and indeed the greatest of them is Durgābar. He also composed songs from the events of the Ramayana, and in a colophon, "Kamatā Iswar vando Viswa Siṃha nripabar", he pays homage to Viswa Siṃha styling him still as a king of Kamatā, as Mankar styled his patron. Further autobiographical elements are found in his songs:

"Kāyastha Śrī Chandradhar      Tāna putra Durgābar  
Viracila git bītopan",

So, he was a Kāyastha by caste, his father's name being Candradhar. Again,

"Nīlācal nāme grām saṃsārat sār;  
Āchay Pārvatī asurar kṣayaṅkār."

He was a resident of the Nilācal hill near Gauhati, and a devotee of the goddess Kāmākhya. His patron's encouragement of the Śākta form of worship is too well known.

To quote Gait: "He (Viswa Siṃha) rose to power about 1515 A.D. As usual in such cases, the Brahmans soon sought him out. They discovered that his tribesmen were Kshatriyas...while Bisu himself was declared to be the son, not of the humble Hariya Mandal, but of the God Śiva....Bisva Singh now became a great patron of Hinduism. He worshipped Śiva and Dugā, and gave gifts to the disciples of Vishnu and also to the priests and astrologers. He revived the worship of Kāmākhya, rebuilt her temple on the Nilācal hill, Gauhati, and imported numerous Brahmans from Kanauj, Benares and other centres of learning. He moved his capital from Chikon Grām to Koch Bihar, where he built a fine city." (H.A., pp. 48-49).

**OJA-PALI INSTITUTION:** Songs of Padmā Purāṇ or of the Rāmāyaṇ composed by Durgābar are sung in festive occasions or popular assemblies, especially in lower Asam, even today, by a band of singers known as Ojā-Pāli. Here the Ojā (Sk. Upādhyāya; Pkt. ujhā) is the master or the leader of the singers who by gesticulations or different modes of intertwining of the fingers and by dancing postures starts the songs himself, and the Pālis (Asm. pāl, to obey) or his followers sing the chorus. This appears to be a time-honoured institution that must have been in vogue long before Śaṅkardew; for Durgābar who might have been a senior contemporary of Śaṅkardew, used this institution for the purpose of preaching his songs. One may trace its origin even to the days when the Rāmāyaṇa songs composed by Vālmiki are said to have been sung by Lava and Kusa themselves. Any way, it seems to be one of the important pre-Śaṅkarite institutions which gave this great poet Durgābar an expression for his genius.

Even from a cursory glance of his poetry we find that Durgābar was no poet of mean order, nor was he an unworthy predecessor of Śaṅkardew in the field of Assamese songs. His description of the Gangā, for instance, appears to be at once arresting for the mastery of the language and art of poetry. In a few of his songs of Padmā Purāṇ his language is seen to be more archaic. But in his Rāmāyaṇa songs he displays a finer poetic genius, and describes the sorrows of Rāmā in the absence of Sītā with a fine touch. The description seems as though it anticipates, though comparatively in a crude form, the most poetic description of Śaṅkardew in Rās Krīdā describing the milk-maids crazed with the grief of Krishna's sudden disappearance from their midst, addressing the tree and she-deer of the forest.

**COLOPHONS IN RAMAYANA SONGS** show him as a devotee of Rāma while other colophons show his devotion to Saraswati and others.

There are still other songs which are closed without referring to any gods or goddesses at all. All these colophons appear to leave no trace of any later retouching, and probably show the nature of the real pre-Vaiṣṇavite colophons. And nowhere in his colophons, even of the Rāmāyaṇa songs, do we find anything resembling pro-Vaiṣṇavite advice or remarks except in the prayers of the dying bird Jaṭāyu expressing his sincere devotion to Rāma:

This appears natural too in view of the neo-Vaiṣṇavism peeping into Assam through the Gupta diplomatic relations with Assam. The colophons as we find them in Durgābar might naturally exist as such, and Śaṅkardew in moulding the ideas of neo-Vaiṣṇavism into a definite shape in Assam, quite its own, might even have developed them into a type which we find in his works. The illustrations from Durgābar confirm that the pro-Vaiṣṇavite colophon in the pre-Vaiṣṇavite works as those of Mādhaw Kandali were in all probability due to revisions of those works in the Vaiṣṇavite period proper or were incorporated by Vaiṣṇavite copyists who in the best of their faith deemed them incomplete without such colophons.

It is interesting to note in this connection that the songs of the Padmā Purāṇ by Durgābar were formerly sung with great enthusiasm by the Muhammadan Ojās in the Manasā Pujā or snake-worship. (*Padmā Purāṇ*, *Bhāithali Khaṇḍa*, Introduction, pp. VI-VII). This is supported by the prevalence of Jikirs or Assamese songs of Islam by Shāh Milan alias Ājān Fakir, who by the seventeenth century introduced the system of singing the name of God among the Muhammadans with claps in exact imitation of Śaṅkardew's Nām-Kīrtan.

SUKAVI NARAYANDEW: Another poet of considerable power and interest is Nārāyaṇḍew whose songs of *Padmā Purāṇ*, like those of Durgābar, are still extremely popular and sung by the Ojā-Pālis in lower Assam. His father was Nara Siṃha, as it appears from one manuscript (quoted in *Padmā Purāṇ*, *Bhāithali Khaṇḍa*, Introduction, p. III).

"Nara Siṃha suta Kavi nām Nārāyaṇ;  
Racilā pravandha sevi Bhawānī caraṇ".

The locality from which he hailed is not exactly known, but the tradition has it that he was born in the village Pacharia in the present Kāmarūp district of Assam while the place of one of the heroes of his songs, Candradhar or Chānd Sadāgar, is said to have been in the village Carakiā, near Chaygāo, in the same district, and the ruins of Chānd's famous Mer-Ghar are still shown there (*Ibid.*).

The songs of Nārāyaṇḍew are also known as Sukanānni, probably an abbreviation of Sukavi-Nārāyaṇi. They are divided into several parts and are also used as incantations to cure persons of snake-bite. One part is called Bhāitheli, because snake-poisoning is said to go down when these songs are sung with sufficient care. This part has again its sub-divisions. The first half deals with Padmā's plot against the life of Lakhindār, another half deals with the dear and near ones of Candradhar. The second dwells on Behulā's adventures on a cargo with the dead body of her husband. And the third describes the final victory of Behulā over death and her reviving all other dead bodies into life.

**SORROWS OF KALI NAG:** Sukavi Nārāyaṇḍew, as he styles himself in his songs, displays a poetic genius of no mean order. In one of the songs he beautifully describes the sorrows of the snake Kālī which being deputed by Padmā, the daughter of Śiva, to bite Lakhindār finds the latter sleeping with Behulā in their bridal bed for the first night:

"Dihā: .... (Are re) Kānde Kālī nāg Lakhāir mukh cāi;  
Kon sate dākim bālak prāṇ futi yāi.

Pad: ..... Culikocā dākim bālar dekhībāk bhāl;  
Māthagot dākim bālar dāb nārikal.  
Kāpālikhān dākim bālar dvitiār jon;  
Dui karṇa dākim bālar bāre gachar pāṇ.  
Dui cakṣu dākim bālar ākāsar tārā;  
Nākagot dākim bālar soṇār pākara.  
Dui oth dākim bālar manohar hāsi;  
Danta pāri dākim bālar mukutār rāśi.  
Jibākhān dākim bālar ālatār baran;  
Galgot dākim bālar haṃsar gathan.  
Dui bāhu dākim bālar yen śālar siri;  
Das ānguli dākim bālar campā fular kari.  
Buk khān dākim bālar candanar patā;  
Piṭhikhān dākim bālar sūrujar chatā.  
Rāj hārḥ dākim bālar mudhar mārāli;  
Kāmi hārḥ dākim bālar putal sārī sārī.  
Peṭgot dākam bālar amiyā bhāndāri;  
Nābhinalā dākim bālar molānar dāri.  
Kakāl khān dākim bālar ati bar saru;  
Āntile muthit luke Harar dambaru.  
Dui ṭapinā dākim bālar dekhībāk bhāl;  
Dui urut dākim bālar yen rām-kal.  
Dui āthu dākim bālar suvarṇar ghilā;  
Dui bhari dākim bālar ketekir dilā ....  
Sukavi Nārāyaṇḍewar suras pāchāli;  
Kālir krandan buli ekai lechāri".

'Chorus: The Kālī snake weeps looking at the face of Lakhindār (in sleep). How can I bite him? My heart breaks,' Verses. How can I



bite his hair, so beautiful? How can I bite his head that looks like the 'dāb' cocoanut? How can I bite his forehead, as beautiful as the crescent of the moon? How can I bite his two ears like the pretty betel leaves? How can I bite his two eyes like the stars in the sky? How can I bite his nose like an ornament of gold? How can I bite his lips so charming with smiles? How can I bite his two rows of teeth like two rows of pearls? How can I bite his neck as that of the gander? How can I bite his tongue of such reddish hue? How can I bite his two arms so beautiful....? How can I bite his ten fingers like the buds of the campā tree? How can I bite his heart looking like a plank of the Candan tree? How can I bite his back as the nimbus of the sun? How can I bite his backbone like the horizontal pole of a house? How can I bite his ribs like rose of dolls? How can I bite his belly a reservoir of nectar? How can I bite his navel like the seed vessel of the lotus? How can I bite his waist that hides in a handful when fastened and looking like the drum of Śiva? How can I bite his two hips so beautiful? How can I bite his two thighs resembling the Rāma plantain trees? How can I bite his two knees like gold *Entada scandens* seeds? How can I bite his two legs like the stem of the lotus? Sukavi Nārāyaṇḍew composes this interesting song on the lament of the Kālī (snake).

There are several other printed publications of Nārāyaṇḍew's songs of Padmā Purāṇ, *Sukanānnā*, *Viṣaharir Janma*, *Parīkṣit Badh*, *Puṣpadhārī Khaṇḍa* and so forth, testifying him as a prolific poet. But they betray enough traces of Vaiṣṇavite retouching. *Viṣaharir Janma*, for instance, opens curiously with the Vaiṣṇavite chorus: "O Manāi, Hari āhe mohor Yadurāi". 'O my Mind, yonder comes my Hari, the scion of the line of Yadu'. *Parīkṣit Badh* starts even with a whole poem on invocation of Rāma. *Puṣpadhārī Khaṇḍa* too begins with a regular Vaiṣṇavite chorus, but concludes with the lines:

"Nārāyaṇḍewe gāy madhur saṃgīt:  
Padmāwatī caraṇe majiā rauka cit."

'Nārāyaṇḍew sings this sweet song. May his mind lie immersed in the feet of Padmāwatī (Snake Goddess).'

SASTHIBAR seems to be the last of the Manasā poets of Asam, first discovered by Benudhar Rājkhawā (*Notes on the Sylheti Dialect*, 1913). His descriptions, particularly of Cānda's Voyage to Ceylon and Council of flowers (Neog's A.S.B., 4th Ed., p. 233) shows better ease and art, the council of flowers almost anticipating Śaṅkardew's description of "divya upaban" in the *Kīrttan Ghoṣā* (Hara-Mohon).

Strangely enough, one *Bāṅglā Mangal Kāvyer Itihās* (3rd Ed.) sets a counter-claim on Nārāyaṇḍew and Śaṣṭhībar banking on alleged traditions, evidently superficial and slippery. He admits the poets as hailing from Sylhet, earlier included in Asam from a hoary antiquity,

and further stating their songs to be in vogue more in Asam than in Bengal (p. 229ff). His own quotation of an alleged Bengali song (p. 236) betray such Asamīyā forms of grammar as *melī* (opening), *chāri* (leaving), *śuni* (hearing), *karī* (doing) against the Bengali affix *iā*, and such distinctive Asamīyā words as 'bāri' (widow), 'magunā' (beggar-woman), and so forth. So the counter-claim defeats itself.

**ARITHMETICAL, ASTROLOGICAL AND ETHICAL VERSES:** The reign of Naranārāyaṇ, styled as Āssamese Vikramāditya (1540-84), is celebrated not only for peace and plenty, but also for proverbial patronage of learning and culture. *Darang Rājvaṃśāvalī* (vs. 604-11, ff) delineates the circle of scholars of varied branches of learning that gathered in his court. Purusottam Bhattacharya of the famous Sanskrit Ratnamālā Vyakaran fame, Śaṅkardew and Rām Saraswati who made the valuable renderings of the Bhāgawata and Mahābhārata in Assamese in his court, Śrīdhara and Bakul Kāyastha who made Assamese renderings respectively of astrological works and of Arithmetic by Līlāwati, in verse, by royal patronage, are a few of them.

**BAKUL KAYASTHA** was considered to be a senior contemporary of Śaṅkardew, writing his *Kitābat Manjari* in 1434 or 1508 (*Asamīyā Bhāsā ūru Sāhityar Buranji*, pp. 280-81); but if he wrote his work under the orders of king Nar-Nārāyaṇ it could not be earlier than 1540 when he came to the throne. Bakul appears to be Śākta from his autobiographical notes:

"Kitābat sāstrakhān param gahan;...  
Bakule barṇālā Siwa bandiā Bhawāni."

*Kitābat Manjari* is divided into three parts and the solutions of common arithmetical problems are given in verse. The work contains also the divisions of the Satya, Treta, Dvāpar and Kali Yugas (Gold, Silver, Copper and Iron Ages) according to their years, and also an account of the old royal families according to the Purānas. Towards the close of the book, examples are quoted from such authors as Nārāyaṇdās, Umāpati Siddha, Hridayānanda Kāyastha and Durgādās; but nothing definite is known about most of these writers. Hridayānanda Kāyastha is another name of Ananta Thakur, the reputed poet of *Śrīrām Kīrtan* or *Ananta Ramayan*, but he flourished in the middle of the seventeenth century.

There are two more writers on arithmetic in Assamese verse. Cūrḍamaṇi wrote his work *Jyotiṣ Cūrḍamaṇi*, on Arithmetic, astrology and mensuration in Assamese verse. It may be guessed that he named this work after him and that it was intended mainly for his pupils:

"Jyotiṣa ye āka, Cūrḍāmaṇi kahe, Bālakasavaka prati." That this work was composed sometime about 1482 Śāka or 1560 A.D. is surmised from the line "Birāśi śakat āchileka kichu chātra," as this work refers to Bakul Kāyastha also. Kaviratna is the third Assamese translator of *Lilāwatī*, the renowned work of the great lady Mathematician of India. It is said that Durgaram Kayastha, perhaps the same person as Durgā Dās referred to in Bakul's work, a forefather of the famous Majindar Baruwa family of Assam, got this work with him ("*Lilawati*" in *Ushā*, Vol. V). The translation appears both in prose and verse. From D.R.V. already quoted, there seems to be another writer Śrīdhara who rendered the Jyotiṣa Sādhya Khaṇḍa into Assamese; but no copy of it seems extant. The same work refers to Puruṣottama Bhattacharyya's compilation of *Ratnamālā* or *Prayoga Ratnamālā* completed in 1568 A.D. Puruṣottama, who in the Naranarayan's court won the title of Vidyāvāgis, is known to be an ancestor of the great Thakur family of Bengal. *Prayoga Ratnamālā* is a still well known work in Bengal and Assam, at least among Sanskrit scholars.

Ramāpati is another non-Vaiṣṇavite poet of this period who rendered *Cāṇakya* into Assamese verse sometime about 1593. Five generations since, his successor Rucinath Kandali rendered the Sanskrit work *Mārkaṇḍeya Cāṇakya* into Assamese verse in about 1751.

**PAGAN POETRY ON THE BHAGAWAT:** Another and the most typical of the non-Vaiṣṇavite poets is Pītambar Dvija who is consistently referred to in several biographies of Śaṅkardew. It is in connection with the latter's enquiry of his merchant disciple, Bhavānanda, now renamed Nārāyaṇ Thākura, as to whether there lived any poet, worth the name, in lower Assam about Barpeta. Nārāyaṇ referred to Pītambar Dvija who then composed verses on *Rukmiṇī Harṇa*. Śaṅkardew asked him whether he could remember any verse composed by Pītambar. Nārāyaṇ recited a few verses from Pītambar in which Rukmiṇī, the bride, complained against Krishna's delay in coming and rescuing her and argued what limb of her was defective so that Kṛṣṇa thus hesitated to come. Just at this moment Sankardew stopped Narayan saying that he should recite no more, as from those verses Sankardew could at once gather that Pītambar was no poet, but a sensualist and a Sākta; and as such was unfit for the purpose of preaching his religion.

One very curious thing, not noted by any scholar earlier, that the line "Kona ange Khuṇa dekhi nāilā Yadumaṇi" attributed to Pītambar has its exact parallel in Mādhava Kandali's *Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa* (XII, 29):

Kamana angata mor hīna dekhilāhā:  
Kī kāraṇe prabhu moka upekṣiā yāhā.

'In what part of my body do you see any defect that you intend to leave me in neglect?' This was said by Sīta to Rāma when Rāma would go on exile without Sītā.

The interesting point about this fact is that Śaṅkardew himself dealt with the same theme of the Rape of Rukmiṇī from the same source, namely Book Ten of the Bhāgavat in Śanskrit, in a kāvya as well as in a drama. Then what Śaṅkardew condemned in Pītambar's rendering of the Śanskrit work is his vulgar or sensual interpretation of the love of Rukmini which seems to have been the wont of the poets before Sankardew. One class of songs composed by Sankardew and Mādhawdew are called Bar Gīt (Noble Numbers or songs Celestial) thus distinguishing them from other songs that were not as highly spiritual. Thus pro-Sankarite literature bears the same relation to the pre-Sankarite literature in general, which pagan literature bears to the Christian. It was more a matter of change of outlook than anything else, and one thing may be described either by a Christian or a pagan or a profane way.

Unfortunately we have no specimen of Pītambar's *Rukmini Haran* so much spoken of, but we have some specimen of his work *Uṣā Pariṇay* (Marriage of Uṣā). This work also illustrates sufficient vulgarity rather than rarefaction of passion which was the wont of the Sankarite poets. The following verses reveal the sentiments of Ushā, before her marriage, as depicted by Pītambar:

Dekhiā kumārī Uṣā guṇe mane mane;  
Dhanya nārī puruṣā bilāsa kare bane.  
Henay samaye yār kole nāhi pati;  
Kalasi bāndhia jale marok juvatī.  
Byartha mor janma bhaila rājār kumārī;  
Hena bane ekale berāo mai nārī."

'Seeing this, princess Uṣā muses within herself: Blessed are the women who enjoy themselves with men in the flower garden. Fruitless is the life of that maiden who has not her husband in her embrace at such a time. Better such a young girl drown herself by a water-jar tied to her neck if in the spring time she has no lover in her lap. Cursed is my life to be born as a princess, for I am loitering in such a flower garden all alone.'

Besides such vulgarity, the conceptions of the fruits of merits, as expressed by these non-Vaiṣṇavite poets, are quite different from those of the Vaiṣṇavite poets and are decidedly of a lower order: Pītambar concludes his work saying:

Uṣār vivāh kathā puṇyamay āti;  
Śūnile bānchit siddhi vārhay bibhūti.  
Bārhe putra pariāl nās kare dukkh;  
Śarīr chāria gaīā bhunje svarga sukh.

'The story of Usā's marriage is very virtuous. One achieves one's wished-for-object by hearing it, and wealth increases in one's family, and children also thrive thereby, and crushes miseries. Finally one leaves one's body and enjoys celestial bliss.' This is definitely an un-Vaiṣṇavite idea.

From an auto-biographical note in the colophon of Uṣā Pariṇay itself we may gather that he was a Brahman by caste and completed this work in "Bāṇa (5) juta bāṇa (5) veda (4) Śaśāṅka (1) samay" or in 1455 Śaka equivalent to 1533 A.D. in the month Baisākh and in auspicious moment on a Thursday, perhaps in the black half of the month. He appears to have had been an inhabitant of the city of Kamatā and a youthful poet.

AN EARLY MAHABHARAT OF NORTHERN INDIA: Assamese rendering of the Mahābhārat by Kavindra Pātra, styled as Parāgali Mahābhārat, was included in the history of Bengali literature (*Vaṅga Bhāṣhā O Sāhitya*, p. 158). It is because a manuscript of it was discovered at Chittagong, where Paragal Khan, a general of Alauddin Hussain Shah (1494-1525), was given a land grant, and it was at the request of that Muhammadan General that Kavindra Pātra rendered the Mahābhārat (*Bāṅgālār Itihās*, p. 262). But an old manuscript found of late in the library of Rājā Bāhādur of Gauripur, Dhubri, Asam, and since published, makes it amply clear that this is an Assamese work and that Kavindra Pātra was an Assamese poet and statesman whose history has been fully discovered. The work begins with the lines that introduce the occasion for composition of the work (vs. 4-11).

The learned author of *Baṅga Bhāṣhā O Sāhitya* complained that the manuscript was written in the Chittangong dialect which is so obscure that it is difficult at times to make any head or tail of it. The manuscript found in Chittagong was incomplete and contained the renderings of the Books from the Ādi to the Strī Parva, without the Books from Śānti Parva to Svargārohan Parva, while the one now published in Assam is complete in one and the same uniform language. But even the variant of the Chittagong manuscript present not the slightest shadow of obscurity or even of difficulty to an Assamese reader. The manuscripts which Dr. Sen used were three in number and they were copied about 220, 224 and 270 years respectively ago while the work seems to have been composed after the close of the fifteenth century. For Viswa Siṃha, Nara Nārāyaṇ's father, who was born only sometime before the fall of Kamatā under Hussain Shah in 1498, in the village of Chikan grām or Chikangarh of the Khutāghāt Pargaṇā in the present Goālpārā district, and came to rule the country between the Karatoyā and the

Bar Nadī in 1515, must have been in his early years when Hussain Shah (1494-1525) came to the throne of Bengal. Viswa Simha (1515-40) had a minister named Narahari, who was a Kāyastha from Mithilā and whose son Payonidhi died while Narahari was alive, leaving behind him two sons. The elder of these sons who secured the title of Kavi Karnapur left as a mendicant, and the younger, Bāṇināth, secured the title of Kavindra for scholarship and the secured title of Pātra when he became a minister to king Nara Nārāyaṇ, which office he kept till 1580.

Bāṇināth accompanied Malladew and Śukladhwaj to Benares for studying. They were also educated earlier by a Maithili scholar, Sārva-bhauma, who used to stay in Visva Simha's court. Thus he enjoyed all the privileges of higher education like the princes themselves (Kayastha Patrikā, Paush and Māgh, 1332 B.E.). When Malladew came to the throne as Nara Nārāyaṇ, and Sukladhwaj, as Cilārāi, became his C-in-C, Bāṇindra, now renowned as Kavindra Pātra, often accompanied them, as in Cilārāi's expedition to Herhambapur:

Rājā bole jāyo Bāpu bilamba nakari:  
Kavi-Indra Pātraka niyoka lage kari (389, D.R.B.).

So the author of this rendering of the Mahābhārat was Bāṇināth Kavindra Pātra whom Dr. Sen curiously calls "Kavindra Parameswar" which title is nowhere found in the colophons. It is likely that such a line as "Kavindra param jatne panchali rachiā" (v. 11) has been misread "Kavindra Parameswar" or so, though it really conveys no sense. So here is an Assamese Sir Philip Sidney, a warrior poet of unusual interest.

Thus Bāṇināth Kavindra Pātra's translation of the Mahābhārat was earlier than that of Aniruddha Rām Saraswatī, far earlier than that of Kāśirām, and later only than those of pre-Vaishnavite poets as Harihar Vipra, Kaviratna Saraswatī, and Rudra Kandali who rendered only certain portions of the Mahābhārat. This rendering of the Mahābhārat was of course no word for word rendering, but a faithful gist of the Mahābhārat in Sanskrit, which may be illustrated by the following example. In the original Sanskrit text of Vedabyās, we find:

#### Sudeshnobāca:

Mūrdhni tvām vāsayeyam bai sarṁsayo me na vidyate:  
Nacedicchati Rājā tvām gacchet sarvena cetasā.  
Striyo rājakule jāśca jāscemā mama beśmani:  
Prasaktāstām nirīkṣante pumāṁsam kaṁ na mohayeh.  
Briṣṇāṁscāvasthitān paśya ya ime mama beśmāni:

Te'pi tvām sannamantība pumāsāṁ kaṁ na mohayeh.  
 Rājā Birātaḥ suśroṇi dṛiṣṭvā bapuramānuṣam:  
 Bihāya mām barārohe tvām gacchet sarvacetasā.  
 Adhyārohed yathā briṁṣān badhāyaibātmano narah.  
 Rājabeśmani te subhru ahitaṁ syāttathā mama.  
 Jathāca karkaṭi garbhamādhatte mrityumātmanah.  
 Tathāvidhamahaṁ manye bāsastava śuchismite.

The Assamese rendering of Kavīndra is faithful, brief and simple:

Māthe kari tomāk rākhite āmi pāri.  
 Strisav dekhile tok nāre pāsarite;  
 Puruṣ kimate dharyya pāray dharite.  
 Rājāi dekhile tok majibeka man:  
 Bale kari dharibeka rākhibeka kon.  
 Apon kantaḥ mui āpane kariba:  
 Mrittikāte viṣa bṛkṣa apane ropiba.  
 Karkatir garbha yen mrityur kāraṇ:  
 Tathābidh māni āmi tomār dhāran.  
 Tomāk rākhile āmi haiba udās....

Such translations in gist would be worthy of any great poet of northern India. Kavi Sanjaya is another Assamese translator of the Mahābhārat whose work is also claimed by Bengalees for its vogue in modern East Bengal districts.

### III. PREPARATIONS FOR THE THEATRE OF RENAISSANCE MIGRATIONS OF THE BARA BHŪYĀS

What in politics, what in religion, the age preceding the birth of Śāṅkardew was an age of turmoil. In politics, different powers like the Chutiyaṣ, the Kachāriṣ, the Bāra Bhūyāṣ the Āhoms and the Koces, were then always struggling for supremacy; and in religion, a mixture of Aryan and non-Aryan practices gave rise to some curious forms of worship in which human sacrifices were not exempt, and which might rather be called irreligion than religion. Against such abuses in religion there grew a general dissatisfaction of the people thus inducing a vigorous outbreak of unorthodoxy. Remnants of different debased Buddhist sects infected with secret and corrupt practices were known to be flourishing even in the heyday of Śāṅkardew's fame, and such practices must have been a great deal responsible for the new and corrupt form of Hindu Tāntricism. Society seemed soon tired of these malpractices and awaited a change. The prestige and influence of the privileged classes sufficiently declined; their authority could be challenged and their monopoly questioned. Culture, which also they seemed to monopolise, extended beyond their circle, the scriptures began gradually to be rendered into Assamese, and free access to the scriptures so long denied on a selfish pretext, was now secured.



All this was sheltered by the new and great movement of neo-Vaiṣṇavism, started by Śāṅkardew, a successor of Candībar, one of the fourteen Bāra Bhūyās, who, as the biographers of Śāṅkardew all agree, was established at the kingdom of Dharma Pāl as the result of a treaty between himself and Durlabh Nārāyaṇ. The biographies show that there were many petty chiefs in the kingdom of Kāmarūpa, mainly about the Karatoyā, during the reign of Dharma Pāl and even before him. Kamaṭeswar Dharma Pāl certainly had his kingdom to the east of that of Gauḍeswar Durlabh Narayan. For after the conclusion of the treaty of the two kings, Dharma Pāl returned to his kingdom, up the Brahmaputra in its old course, which he reached after many days and anchored at Ghorāghāt in the Rungpur district. It therefore appears that Dharmapāl's capital was just near the Karatoyā while that of Durlabh was to the west of it (Rāmcaraṇ, vs. 89-90). The fourteen Bāra-Bhūyās imported by Dharma Pāl were situated at Lengā Māguri, between Hājo and Barnadī (vs. 94-100), part of the kingdom of Kāmarūpa sometime later occupied by Durlabh Nārāyaṇ after Dharma Pāl. These Bāra Bhūyās were like chiefs under the king, and Caṇḍībar, the leader among them, might have slowly risen to power. Durlabh Narayan might suspect that this powerful chief among the fourteen Bāra Bhūyās might one day declare himself independent in some part of his kingdom or at least might rebel. So he made it a point for Caṇḍībar to pay the king of Gauḍa an annual visit and was once imprisoned in default (Ibid, vs. 111-132). That Caṇḍībar as a Bāra Bhūyā wielded immense political power is sufficiently evidenced (Rāmcaraṇ, vs. 2526-30; Bhūṣaṇ, 348-49). That these Bāra Bhūyās extended their territories on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra far into the east is well known. After earning his release by the proof of his scholarship, Candībar had to encounter with the Bhots, a hill people who often had their toll by oppressing people at Lengā Māguriā, at the request of King Dharma Pāl. He took an army of Bhūyā and others and drove the Bhots away by killing a large number of them. The king had highly honoured him for this success, but Caṇḍībar preferred to leave this place and they came long up the Brāhmaputra to a place called Gopeswar on the bank of the Rotā river. Caṇḍībar had a son named Rājadhara who had again a son named Suryabara born at Lengā Māguriā. From Gopeswar they came to a place called Tembuani Vandha where they decided to settle. They found this place quite comfortable but floods often spoiled their crops. So soon they migrated to another place called Āli Pukhuri which subsequently became their permanent abode (Rāmcaraṇ, vs. 192-224). These later places are located in the present district of Nagāo, Asam. Sūryabar was a child of two months and three summers when they came to Tembuāni, and Rājadhara 62 years old when they came finally to Āli

Pukhuri, while Caṇḍibar breathed his last at Tembuāni where they resided for 25 years. Twin sons, Jayanta and Mādhawa by name, were born to Rājadhār and his wife Dewahuti at Āli Pukhuri. Sūryabar was married to Kherasuti, daughter of one Rāmagiri Chaudhāri and Rohini. As a result of this union, Kusumbar was born to them and he was married to Satyasandhā, daughter of Aniruddha and Savyā, and Śaṅkardew was born to them while at Āli Pukhuri. (Rāmcaraṇ, vs. 225-301). Śaṅkardew introduces himself in an autobiographical note in his rendering of the Bhagawat Bk. X, confirming this genealogy in general.

**EARLY LIFE OF SANKARDEW.** Rāmcāraṇ, the most exhaustive and the earliest and contemporaneous biographer of Śaṅkardew, describes that Śaṅkardew was conceived on a second day of the moon on a Thursday on the tenth day of Māgh (v. 340), and the date of his birth is given as the Friday of the tenth day of the new moon and fifth day of Āswīn (vs. 360-67). Also the date of his demise is given as the second day of the new moon. The years of Śaṅkardew's birth and death do not appear in his work, but the years of his life are given as one hundred and twenty years deficient by one.

Bhādra māhat śuklā dvitīyā tithi bhailā;  
Sehi dinā Guru nara-nātak erilā. 3834  
Barišek manda āyu bhailā chaykuri;  
Teve cali gaila Guru nar-dehā eri. 3835

Neither does the second biographer, Daityāri, give the date and year of Śaṅkardew's birth at all; but he gives the year of death quite clearly, as also that of Mādhawdew as Śaka 1490 (1568 A.D.) and 1518 (1596 A.D.) respectively.

Caudha śa nabai śakat niścay  
Śaṅkar baikunthe gaila;  
Tāt pāche ār āthāis bachar  
Mādhawdew āchilā.  
Pancadaś śata āthāra śakat  
Baikuntha gailā Madhaw. 1736.

So from these data, the dates of birth of Śaṅkardew and Mādhawdew are found out. Other and later biographers make confusions worse confounded.

The Bhūyās were proverbial Śakti worshippers, so much so that Caṇḍibar, one great ancestor of Śaṅkardew was surnamed Devidās, for having made the goddess subservient to his will by his devotion (Rāmcaraṇ, v. 55).

"Bhakti kari Devik karilā dāsī prāy;  
Devidās nām bhailā ehi kārye jāy."

It is interesting to read the biographer's note that all the lamps lit before the goddess were miraculously extinguished the moment Śaṅkardew was born. This event simply foretells that here came a warning to the family tradition of the Śiromaṇi Bhuyās that the ancestral form of worship was now to go. But the Bhūyās who could hardly think of it were much downcast and thought that it forbode evil (vs. 367-69). Detailed accounts are given of Śaṅkardew's life, from day to day, from month to month and then from year to year. On Friday, the fifteenth day of his birth, his mother Satyasandhā dies and leaves Śaṅkar in charge of his grand-mother (vs. 624-28); his grandfather and father died in Śaṅkardew's seventh month and fifth year respectively.

But Daityāri says that the death of Śaṅkardew's mother followed that of his father and they occurred early in his life, for his grand-mother alone brought him up (vs. 36-37). Bhūshan confirms that Kusumbar's death preceded that of Satya-sandhā (vs. 114, 119ff); but he records that these deaths must have occurred much later, certainly never before Śaṅkardew was twelve or thirteen years old. According to Rāmcaran, it was in his thirteenth year and at the chastisement of Kherasuti that Śaṅkardew agreed to come to school; and it is the three paternal uncles of Kusumbara, Jayanta, Mādhaw and Halāyudha, who got him to school (vs. 1336-49); and Daityāri also writes to the same effect (vs. 440-44). But Bhūṣaṇ says it is Kusumbara who led Sankardew to school (vs. 29-46). Also according to Rāmānanda, Kusumbar's death preceded that of Satyasandhā, and these events took place after the seventh year of Sankardew (vs. 116-17).

The Bardowā *Guru Carit* in prose goes even one step ahead of Bhūṣaṇ and says that Kusumbar died sometime after Sankardew was married to Suryawati, and that Satyasandha's death followed that of her husband. And Lakshminath Bezbarua, the latest biographer of Sankardew, opines that Sankardew's mother died on the third day after her son's birth. (*Sankardew*, ch. II, pp. 11-12). All that can be gathered from these seeming bundle of contradictions is that Śaṅkardew went to school very late, certainly never before he was twelve or thirteen, and was much engrossed in play.

All the biographers endorse the same view that Śaṅkardew had an exceptionally strong physique from his childhood. and his passion for play from early life is remarkable. With his early playmates he would either go to the Brahmaputra to catch the aquatic animals by diving, or he would go to the forest, catch the wild deer and let them loose to the great wonder and admiration of his friends (Rāmcaran, vs. 1047-1231). In his eleventh year Śaṅkardew and his company of young friends

devised one day an excursion to swim across and back the Brahmaputra. It was the month of Bhādra and the great river was full to the brim. Of all the playmates only Rām Rām dared accompany him. Both reached the other bank; when Śaṅkardew was prepared to swim back, Ram Ram did not dare, and Śaṅkardew swam back alone. (Rāmcaraṇ, vs. 1290-98). Other biographers too give almost an unanimous statement on these points. (Bhuṣaṇ, vs. 61-66; Daityāri vs. 66-67).

**A FINISHED SCHOLAR.** While other biographers make no particular mention of the name of the teacher to whose school Śaṅkardew went, Rāmānanda distinctly says that it was to the school of Kalāp Keśari that Śaṅkardew was escorted the first day by his grandfather Sūryyabar (v. 132); but all of them agree that from the beginning Śaṅkardew made a brilliant impression on his teacher. Rāmānanda tells us (vs. 142-45) that during the first days of Śaṅkar's coming to school, the teacher asked the elderly students, by whom Śaṅkardew was sitting, to compose a few verses by themselves at home on the deities whom they adored. Śaṅkardew, who now knew the consonants alone and not the vowels, except the first, and was yet to be acquainted with them taking it to be an injunction on himself too, composed a beautiful poem on Hari with only the consonants and the first vowel. The poem is given as follows:

Karatala kamala kamala dala nayana;  
 Bhavadava dahana gaḥana bana śayana.  
 Napara napara para satarata gamaya;  
 Samaya nabhaya bhaya samahara satataya.  
 Kharatata bara sara hata dasa badana;  
 Khagacara nagadhara fanadhara śayana.  
 Jagadagha mapahava bhavabhaya tarāṇa;  
 Parapada laya kamalaja nayana.

To leave alone the miracles related by the biographers, evidences are enough to show that Śaṅkardew as an early scholar was of outstanding merit and for this he was held in high esteem by his teacher and classmates alike. Rāmcaraṇ even names certain students who were really senior to Śaṅkardew in classes but whom he presently surpassed. The teacher was so pleased with him that he made Śaṅkardew a pupil teacher (vs. 1355-56). Though just to respect the feeling of his old grandmother he went to school and though he could soon outshine all his fellow pupils, Śaṅkardew, it is said, could not quite give up his playful adventures easily. As a matter of fact, it is noted by his earliest biographer, that in his fourteenth year Śaṅkardew, earned one day's leave to join his companions in play, by bribing the teacher with two silver coins and two pieces of cloth stolen from the box of his grandmother (vs. 1386-92).

'The teacher said 'O mother, hear my reply. Śaṅkardew's power is immense. Having a mind to play, the noblest of my pupils, Śaṅkardew, has left for play by bribing me with two rupees and a pair of cloths.' So saying he returned them to the old woman, who heartily laughed and did not take them back. Thus he was brought to bay and played a truant no more. Śaṅkardew became now more earnest in his studies than ever.

Bhūṣaṇ speaks of Śaṅkardew presently surpassing his senior school fellows and describes his early method of comparative study of grammar, poetry, Puranas, Scriptures, and of the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyaṇa, (vs. 47-50). Daityāri also describes how well-versed he became in various śāstras and how engrossed he was in them (vs. 52-54), and then goes on to describe how skilful he had been in Yogic feats, and how he abandoned this practice only when he came by the Bhagawata (vs. 56-60). Bhūṣaṇ also speaks of his wonderful Yogic feats. (vs. 66-68).

AN EARLY DRAMATIST: Rāmcarāṇ says that in his seventeenth year Śaṅkardew returned home after completing study of all the scriptures (vs. 1402-05). Now when Kusumbar died leaving his sons Śaṅkardew and Banguyāgiri quite minor, his aged father called his younger brother Jayanta to him publicly before all the Bhūyās and put him in charge of their state (Rāmānanda, vs. 119-20). Rāmcarāṇ says that immediately after his student life, Śaṅkardew now past his minority, took over the charge of their hereditary state from the paternal uncle of his father, who conducted the affairs after Kusumbar's death (vs. 1405-86). But the first and foremost fact of Śaṅkardew's early life as a leader of thought is his achievement in the theatrical performance of Cihna Yātrā. He was now in his nineteenth year of age, in 1468, and taking over the charge of the office of Śiromaṇi Bhūyā two years back, it so happened that Jayanta and Mādhawa, the paternal uncles of his father, along with many other respected Bhūyās, came to his place, and thus requested him (Rāmcarāṇ, v. 1453):

Vidyāta pārgata śāstra āche yata  
 Samastake āchā parhi.  
 Samaste lokar hariṣa bistar  
 Vaikunṭha diyoka garhi. 1453.

'You are well-versed in all learning and have completed the study of all scriptures. Do give us a picture of the Paradise to the immense joy of all of us.' To this Śaṅkardew readily agreed:

Tomāsār bākye satye satye satye  
 Dekhāibō Vaikunṭha pur;

Cihna Yātrā nāme karibō bekat  
Hariṣa pāibā pracūr. 1457

'By your advice I promise to present Vaikuntha (Paradise) before your eyes. It will be expressed in the form of Cihna-Yātrā (Opera in Scenes), and it is sure to give you joy.' Presently Śaṅkardew ordered such musical instruments as 'khol' to be prepared under his own instruction (vs. 1457-59) and was himself engaged in painting the scenery of Vaikuntha and writing out the scenes in a full Act including songs, speeches and Sanskrit verses (vs. 1462-63). Rāmcaran describes this operation and its influence on people in two long chapters (vs. 1451-1584).

**A GURU OF GURUS:** The Cihna Yātrā performance was a tremendous success, Śaṅkardew himself playing in a main role. His school teacher, Mahendra Kandalī, at the end of the performance stood before the audience of ten thousand persons, declaring aloud that Śaṅkardew had become his religious preceptor, and prostrated as many as four times confirmed by the audience. (vs. 1548-51). This bold example was immediately followed by many others including Rām Rām Guru, Śaṅkardew's most intimate early playmate and their family priest. They pressed Śaṅkardew for initiation, *Śaran*, and unable to avoid, he asked them to come over the next morning (vs. 1555-58).

**EARLY RENDERING OF THE BHAGAVATA:** Śaṅkardew now felt the need of rendering at least the Tenth Book of the Bhāgawat into Assamese for the purpose of initiating people into the neo-Vaiṣṇavite faith. So he wrote his first work, *Uddhawa Sambād* overnight, and initiated the people in the morning as arranged. (vs. 1653-84).

In Śaṅkardew's twentieth year, it so happened that all the Bhūyās approached him and wanted him to lead them all to Tembuāni, the old home of their forefathers. This being agreed upon, all the Bhūyās headed by Śaṅkardew went to Tembuāni and arranged to settle in the respective lands of their forefathers as pointed out by one Burhā Khān, and left Āli Pukhuri for good. Śaṅkardew himself took a hoe, it is said, to raise the plinth of his new prayer-house and there came by a four-handed (Viṣṇu) image under the ground. (v. 1516). This he preserved in his Nāmghar and used as a substitute for the goddesses for the people to worship. (vs. 1614-18). Henceforth Śaṅkardew began to devote himself to regular prayers in his prayer-house at Tembuāni, singing the name of Hari with a large audience (v. 1632). In his twenty-first year Śaṅkardew introduced and celebrated the Dol festival for the first time

amidst great rejoicings with Nām-Kīrttan (vs. 1633-43). About this time Śaṅkardew made up his mind to devote his life for propagation of Vaiṣṇavism and to make over the charge of his dukedom to the two paternal uncles of his father. They in turn thought it time to bind Śaṅkardew in the silken tie of matrimony, and so his wedlock was performed with Sūryavatī, the daughter of one Harikhān Bhūyā, son of Satānanda.

**PILGRIMAGE FOR TWELVE YEARS:** Sūryavatī conceived on the ninth day of Baisaga and delivered a female child on the eighth day of Pauṣa (v. 1740) presumably of 1472. After the ninth month of this delivery, Sūryavatī fell ill and died on the Wednesday of the second Asvina of 1873 (vs. 1755-61). Śaṅkardew had as many as three bereavements till now by the early deaths of his parents and wife. This naturally embittered his feelings against worldly pleasures and he now wanted to go on pilgrimage along with some friends. His orphan Manu stood in his way, and so he wanted to dispose of her in early marriage. He left the charge of his State affairs with the three paternal uncles of Kusumbar, got Manu married in her seventh year on a Thursday in the month of Agraḥāyana of 1480, and proposed to leave his house in charge of his brother and son-in-law. (vs. 1818-37). Bhūṣaṇ records the facts in the same manner though so briefly and though according to him Sūryavatī's death occurred after her daughter's marriage. Rāmānanda also supports that Sūryavatī's death succeeded her daughter's marriage, but confuses the two names of the daughter and the son-in-law (vs. 200-09).

Śaṅkardew took leave of his friends and relatives including his grandmother, Kherasutī, and set out on pilgrimage on a Friday. Amongst his companions were Mahendra Kandali, Rām Rām Guru, Sarvajay, Balorām, Sarvānanda, Dāmodar and Śrīrām (vs. 1842-46). The first sacred thing they visited was Gangā which they reached in two months and twenty-one days (vs. 1910-12). They stayed there for about nine days and then made for Gayā, where too they stayed for three nights. Then for ten days they once more came to Gangā and then in twenty-one days they reached the Jagannāth temple or Śrīkṣetra at Purī (vs. 1928-31). Many incidents are related to say how cordially Śaṅkardew was received at Jagannāth temple, and all biographers generally agree that Śaṅkardew's scholarship in interpreting the Brahma Purāṇa was highly appreciated at Purī. (Bhūṣaṇ's vs. 128-35). Rāmānanda mentions the names of the twelve persons who had been with him to Orissa after others returned home, and of Śaṅkardew's staying for nearly five months at Orissa. (vs. 213-21).



Śaṅkardew's meeting with Caitanyadew (1485-1533) at least in this pilgrimage (1479-91) in Orissa is out of question, yet one biographer of the lot, Rāmānanda, describes their alleged meeting (vs. 221-28):

'When about this time Ratha Yātrā festival came, the Moving Image (Śaṅkardew) was on the chariot. Both Caitanyadew and Śaṅkardew spied each other and both enquired of each other through others. Caitanyadew said, 'I say what is the essence of truth that he (Śaṅkardew) will be the deliverer of a large number of souls in the eastern country. At his sight, I have come to know that he is no (ordinary) human being.' This was reported to Śaṅkardew before others, but he maintained absolute silence on this point.'

Śaṅkardew left Śrīkṣetra (Puri) for Bṛndāban with only a few of his followers, and Rāmcaran names them. (vs. 2019-35). Both Rūpa and Sanātana thence returned, and Śaṅkardew with four companions made for Uttara Bāhinī Gangā (Gāṅges flowing towards the north) and after staying there for a night came to Barāha Kṣetra where he entered his fortieth year. (vs. 2055-58). This confirms that Śaṅkardew's pilgrimage began in his thirtieth year. Thence he made for other sacred places, namely, Prayāg, Puṣkarini, and for Mathurā where he stayed for six months. (vs. 2058-61).

Then Śaṅkardew left for Dwārakā on a Bihu Sunday with Sarvajay, Balorām and Sarvānanda. (vs. 2061-68). From Mathurā Śaṅkardew came to the Jumna and then to Gokul. (vs. 2088-89). Śaṅkardew now completed his pilgrimage, but went again to Gayā and Śrīkṣetra before he returned to Tembuāni. Over and above these mentioned by Rāmcaran, Rāmānanda refers to Setu Khanda, Bārānasi and Badarikāśram, etc., as visited by Śaṅkardew in his pilgrimage. (vs. 230-33).

Thus Śaṅkardew, now forty-two years old, at last returned home and was warmly received by all especially by his grandmother, Kherasuti, who though stumbling in a hurry and bleeding in feet, embraced Śaṅkardew in extreme love. (Daiyātri, vs. 70-71). Rāmānanda records that Śaṅkardew's grandmother was the first to be initiated into the new faith of Nām Dharma gradually preached by Śaṅkardew, fresh from his pilgrimage. (vs. 271-311). According to Rāmcaran, the more important fact now was the proposal of his remarriage by Jayanta and Mādhawa, and its subsequent performance with Kāṇḍī, daughter of Rām Bhūyā. (vs. 2139-40; Bh. 147 ff.)

**SURRENDER OF HEREDITARY SECULAR LEADERSHIP:** Another point of importance was Śaṅkardew's surrender of hereditary leadership of the Bāra Bhūyās. (v. 2149).

"Jayantā Mādhawa duyo, priya bākye āśvāsīā,  
 Sambudhi bulilā Śaṅkarak;  
 Tomār pitrir lok, tomāte khātōk Bāp  
 Carcciok pūrva biṣayak.  
 Śaṅkare bolanta mok, nalāge pitrir lok,  
 Prayojan nāhike āmār;  
 Parhilohō śāstra dukhe, gṛhat bahiā sukhe  
 Karibohō arthak bicār.

'Jayanta and Mādhawa addressed Śaṅkar affectionately and said 'Let the subjects of your father serve you, and let you attend to your secular State.' Śaṅkar replied, 'I do not need the subjects of my father. I have studied the scriptures with great pains, and let me now enter into their significance sitting at home without worries.' In spite of this, it is said, Śaṅkardew was brought by the people to take charge of his dukedom. (v. 2150). Bhūṣaṇ says that Śaṅkardew took over the charge of his State affairs to hand them over to his son-in-law, Hari Bhūyā (v. 155).

Side by side with his transfer of responsibility of secular affairs, he ordered his cousin Rāmrāi, to build a prayer-house. (v. 2151).

Śaṅkare bolanta bhāi, śunioka Rāmrāi,  
 Dewagrih sājio yatane;  
 Hena kathā śunilanta, Satra gṛha sajāilanta  
 Rāmrāi mahā rangmane.  
 Rām rām Guru sange sehi grihe basi range,  
 Bhāgawat karilā bicār;  
 Tattwa marma jānilanta, mane khed karilanta  
 Māyāmay anitya saṁsār.

'Śaṅkar said, 'Oh brother, Rāmrāi, build a prayer-house' On hearing this very gladly Rāmrāi built a temple. He then used to interpret the Bhāgawat in that house with Rāmrām, and when they came to know its purport they repented that this world is ephemeral and an illusion."

All the biographers are unanimous in stating that one Jagadīś Mīśra of Trihut came to Bardowā in Asam in quest of Śaṅkardew to recite to him the Bhāgawata as directed by the god of Jagannāth at Puri where he went to do so (vs. 2158-59, Bh. vs. 164-65).

Śaṅkar badati śunā Vipra mahāsay:  
 Jagannātha dayā mok sampūrṇe āchay. 2175.  
 Kālī ārambhilā mahā grantha Bhāgawat;  
 Gīt pad kari mai āchōho pūrvat. 2176.  
 Eta hante bhakta save āsiā mililā.  
 Dewa griha paśi mahā nāt ārambhilā. 2177.  
 Jisava arthak kahe Gītā Bhāgawate.  
 Save artha byakta huyā āchay gītate. 2178.  
 Anantare nāma dharilanta bhaktagane:  
 Amrit bariṣe yen Brāhmaṇar mane.  
 Kīrttan karay pālī ghoṣāk gāway:  
 Ojhā pad bole jen amrit sincay. 2179.

‘Śaṅkar says, ‘Hear me, Sir, Jagannāth has all kindness on me. Tomorrow you may start reciting the Bhāgawat. I have already composed songs and verses on it.’ Meanwhile his devotees came and began to sing the songs about Hari in his prayer-house. The ideas that are embodied in the Gītā and the Bhāgawat are fully expressed in his songs. When the devotees sang the songs with one voice, it seemed to the Brāhman as though there came a shower of nectar. The Ojhā (Master Artist) would sing the verses and the Pālis (band of singers) would join the chorus, and this all appeared like sprinkling of nectar’. Jagadīś, as advised, recited the twelve books of the Bhāgawat interpreting them, and Śaṅkardew corrected and commented on them when he deemed it necessary. (vs. 2181-82).

**EARLY LIFE OF MĀDHAWDEW:** Mādhawdew is undoubtedly the Jupiter in the solar system of this great Vaiṣṇavite upheaval in Assam. Rāmānanda’s account appears to be the most comprehensive so far as Mādhawdew’s early life is concerned. (vs. 321-412). It clearly says that the forefathers of Śaṅkardew and Mādhawdew lived together at Kanaupur in the province of Bāndukā about the Karatoyā and when Caṇḍibar came to live at Kamatā, the forefathers of Mādhaw still stayed there. Barkanā Giri, the father of Mādhawdew, lost his first wife, got his eldest son, Rūpcandra Giri married, and then left Bāndukā towards eastern Assam on a plea of trade. He came to Bardowā where his relatives, the Bāra Bhūyās, stayed and then came to Nārāyaṇpur in the present sub-division of North Lakhimpur. He found an opportunity for trade between Bāndukā and Nārāyaṇpur and carried it on. In the meantime he re-married at Bardowā in a family that was related to Śaṅkardew. Then he went back to Bāndukā and stayed there for seven years with his eldest son. After coming once more to Bardowā they could not return to Bāndukā owing to anarchy prevailing in that western part of Kāmrūpa. Meanwhile Barkanā’s wife conceived. Also the Kachāris about this time began to exploit the villages in Bardowā and the people took to their heels in the forest. Barkanā with his wife, servants and some properties did the same. Unfortunately the servants stole away all he had with him, and they were rescued and carried by a boat to Nārāyaṇpur. Barkanā Giri with his wife now settled at Baligāo in Nārāyaṇpur, and there a son was born to them at midday on the ninth day of the bright moon in the month of Baisākh. It was Mādhawdew. When he was sufficiently grown up, he was sent to the teacher’s house where he studied Sanskrit grammar, epics and mythologies. When he returned he found his old parents in a helpless state and put his shoulders in a manly way to the yoke of maintenance of the family by his own labour. Then they went more eastward to Hābung and other places where they stayed with a friend and subsequently a sister was born to Mādhawdew who was later married to

Rāmdās and became the mother of Rāmcaraṇ, the earliest biographer of Śaṅkardew.

**A SCHOLAR IN ŚAKTA LORE:** Rāmcaraṇ, quite exhaustive on other points, gives just a small account of Mādhawdew's early life. Daityāri's account differs from Rāmānanda only in slight details. (vs. 109-217). He says it was the Āhoms, who looted the villages at Bardowā, which is more likely as they then extended their territories to the west. He also says that it was at Bāndukā that Mādhawdew was educated in logic, philosophy, politics, literatures and scriptures, including the learning essential for a kāyastha. Mādhawdew's father died at Nārāyaṇpur and Mādhawdew left his old mother with Rāmdās and went to Bāndukā. There he took to trade, purchased some pearls and corals which he sold again in upper Assam with the profit of rupees one hundred in all. Then he came down the Brahmaputra for trade on a larger scale, but had a serious attack of dysentery. He directed his companions to take him to his brother's house at Bāndukā; but finding his case hopeless they left him on the bank of the Brahmaputra, whence he was of course carried by his half brother, taken care of and cured. When after a long time Mādhawdew returned to his old mother who was reported of the death of his son and was now overjoyed. It is on this occasion that Mādhawdew asked Rāmdās to purchase a pair of white goats whose horns he would bind with silver and would sacrifice them before the goddess whom he then considered responsible for restoring his life. This simple event brought him to Śaṅkardew. Soon after this event Mādhawdew gave up the idea of marriage and cleared off all previous engagements in regard to marriage and trade and became an ideal disciple in all respects.

**AN EPIC MEETING:** It was at this Dhūyāhat that the most interesting and important event of Śaṅkardew's life took place, namely, his epic meeting with Mādhawdew, his greatest disciple, and the 'friend, philosopher and guide' of his later life. Rāmdās, brother-in-law of Mādhawdew and father of Rāmcaraṇ, the biographer, was out in quest of two goats to be sacrificed to the goddess Durgā. Rāmdās, in his search for the goats, happened to come to the village where Śaṅkardew had been. The magnet of Śaṅkardew's personality was too strong for him, and Rāmdās fell prostrate at his feet at the first sight even without knowing whom he thus respected. Śaṅkardew asked him affectionately who he was and what mission brought him to the place, and Rāmdās frankly told him about it. 'Saying so, Rāmdās maintained silence, and on hearing him Śrī Śaṅkar said smiling—'Hear me, Rāmdās, I speak to you. You have not certainly

heard of the great religious work, Bhāgawat.' Then he explained to Rāmdās how according to the Bhāgawat, sacrifice before the goddess was simply a sin. On hearing these words of Śaṅkardew, Rāmdās became fearful, and returned home without buying any goat. When Mādhawdew returned and heard all about it, he flew into fury and chided Rāmdās like any thing. 'You are Hokarā ('Howling', Ramdas's nickname), and you must be dull of intellect. I gave you money and yet you failed to purchase the goats? You speak things as though I were a dunce. You interpret religion, as though I knew nothing of it.' Rāmdās simply said, 'Do not be angry with me. Let us go to Śaṅkar presently. You boast of yourself as a great scholar. But once you are in the presence of Śaṅkar, you are bound to become nervous.' However they waited for the morning and at day-break Rāmdās and Mādhawa went to Śaṅkardew. Mādhawa took some betel nuts and leaves with him. They came near the place of Śaṅkar, Mādhawa spoke to himself that he would not salute Śaṅkardew, but would just discuss the theories laid down in the scriptures. Thus meditating in his journey they came near Śaṅkardew, and Mādhawa found Śaṅkar sitting. Mādhawa felt his hair standing on an end by the lustre shed by Śaṅkar's person, and Mādhawa said to himself—'what tremendous influence does his personality exercise!' Mādhawa's body began to shrink seeing Śaṅkar's feet, and Mādhaw fell prostrate at Śaṅkar's feet. Rāmdās too did the same and Śaṅkar asked both of them to take their seats.' (Rāmcaraṇ, vs. 2090-2210). Daityāri gives a slightly different and more detailed account of Rāmdās or Gayāpāṇi's early acquaintance with Śaṅkardew (vs. 220-229). This says that Rāmdās whose earlier name was Gayāpāṇi, son or Hokorā Kuñciā, was sent back from his pilgrimage by god Jagannāth at Purī enabling him to meet Śaṅkardew and still indirectly to make Śaṅkardew and Mādhawdew meet. (vs. 229-33).

THE HISTORIC DEBATE was then initiated by Mādhawadew saying, 'All worship the goddess in autumn. It is the religious custom and law in vogue from early times. Violation of rules prescribed by the Vedas entail great sins, and people thus go to the hell when they meet death. One must observe the rules prescribed by the Vedas lest one should be called a vile creature; knowing these, we worship the goddess. It is the command of God and message of the Vedas.' Śaṅkar looked at Mādhaw and said—'Let me tell you the purpose of the scriptures. The sages interpret the import of the Vedas, the true sense of which is Bhakti (Love); but they explain it otherwise. Meditation and sacrifices etc. may lead one to Brahmālok, but one is doomed to hell again after his merit is done. Vedic rituals may be worthy when performed without the least defect; but it is fruitless if not properly dedicated. If, however, it bears fruit, the fruit is subject to decay. It is why the truly learned never believe in these (rituals). If a sacrifice is performed and an

animal killed, it can bear no fruit when not duly dedicated. If such a person goes to heaven, who should then go to hell? The purpose for which he kills the animal is also not sure; so such a person must be doomed to the darkest hell for good. 'The path of Pravritti (Desire) is difficult; for birth and rebirth know no end' (vs. 2211-19).

Śaṅkardew continued: 'The sage Vyāsa composed the Mahābhārat and the Purāṇs. He has prescribed the castes and their duties. He has divided the four Vedas into branches. And yet his mind was repentent. His mind was not in peace, for he prescribed the (Vedic) religion that enjoined killing of animals. The great work Bhāwawāt is a divine work. It was related to Brahmā by Narayana. Brahmā narrated it to Nārada who reported it to Vyāsa. Vyāsa described this great Bhāgawāt, and taught Śuka this essence of all scriptures, and Śuka preached it before Parikṣita. None observe the Love of Krishna in company with the virtuous, and all go down to the dreadful hell by following the rituals. So I have rendered the Bhāgawāt (in Sanskrit) to verses (in vernacular) so that the people of the world may be delivered (from all sins).' Mādhawa then wanted to know what is the exact process by which men may be delivered from all sins. Śaṅkar looked at the face of Mādhawa and said, 'There is no way for accomplishment of Love save the company of the virtuous. Those who would be delivered (from the sins) of this world should first try to serve the virtuous.' On hearing all this, Mādhawdew was more than convinced and he lay prostrate at the feet of Śaṅkardew as his disciple (vs. 2222-30).

Daityāri gives a slightly different description about the debate:  
 Yathā tarormūla niṣechanena tripyanti tatskandhabhujo-  
 pasākhā; Prānopahāraśca yathēndriānām tathāca sarvacana  
 mucyatejyā.

'Mādhawa cited scriptures to show Prabṛtti (path of Desire), and Śaṅkar refuted him by showing Nibṛtti (path of Renunciation). From early in the morning they were arguing till the afternoon and yet the debate did not come to an end. No one could stop the other finally. At this stage Śaṅkardew cited a verse from the Bhāgawata that said that the branches and leaves of a tree are all nourished when water is poured at its foot, and as neither the branches nor leaves can receive the water when poured on them instead of pouring it at the foot, so all the gods are pleased when Kṛṣṇa is worshipped, but none are satisfied when the gods are directly worshipped. On hearing this verse Mādhaw at once resigned all worship of gods in his heart and paid his respect to Śaṅkardew to be his religious preceptor at heart (vs. 263-68).

ABANDONING EASTERN ASAM. Śaṅkardew, now stronger than ever, spent almost all his time in religious discourse, making his political responsibilities to Hari Bhūyā, his son-in-law (vs. 2386-87). Here he established a monastery (Satra) by planting a Bilva tree and naming the place Belguri. Here it was again that Hari was arrested and beheaded for the default of the Bhūyās in catching elephants under royal orders, for it was in the Ahom territories that they now lived (v. 2288). Śaṅkar-

dew stayed at Dhūyāhāt for fourteen years (vs. 2419-20) and there the three sons, Rāmānanda, Kamalalocaṇ, and Haricaraṇ, and one daughter Viṣṇupriyā were born to him (v. 2544-46). The two incidents, namely, the beheading of his son-in-law, (Rāmcaraṇ, vs. 2388-95; Daityāri, vs. 414-27), and the malice of the Brāhmins, embittered his feelings and Śaṅkardew presently determined to leave Dhūyahāt. In the meantime they heard of King Nara Nārāyaṇ in Western Kāmarūpa, not only as a virtuous king, but also as a poet and scholar (v. 2430-31). This was the time when Nara Nārāyaṇ invaded Eastern Assam; and so Śaṅkardew ordered all people to get ready to leave for Western Assam. (Daityāri vs. 439-40; Rām, vs. 2440-41). The first expedition led by Nara Nārāyaṇ and Śukladhwaj against the Ahoms is dated 1546 and the then Ahom king was Śuklenmung alias Gargayā Rajā (1539-1552), his predecessor being Suhungmung alias Dihingīā Rajā (1497-1539). By the down current of Brahmaputra Śaṅkardew passed by Khāgarikatā (Nagão), Kaliābar, Siddhari, Bardowā, Darrang, Kuārbhāg, Barbhāg, Kheh (?), and then came to Kapalā, by the old course of the Brahmaputra, where Śaṅkardew stayed for six months. It is here that Mādhawadew's mother died (vs. 2451-70). Then they left the place again by the old course of the Brahmaputra and passed by Sundarī, the topography of which is related by the way, saying that Narakāsura collected two beautiful women from this place though not a single woman of the like could be had from five to ten villages in the neighbourhood (vs. 2476-78). Then they came to Ciraliāmukh or Bāusi where Mādhawadew stayed for some time now. Others went their way by the same old course of the Brahmaputra, came by Sarpateswargrām and through Gayājān came to Barpetā. Here there was a very big tree called Cūṇparā, and Śaṅkardew and his followers anchored their boats under this tree. They found this place comfortable and stayed here for sometime.

**NARAYAN ALIAS BHAWANANDA:** It is at this place that another interesting event took place.

'When Śaṅkardew used to stay at Dhūyāhāt, a Brāhmaṇ named Bhāskar with a good taste in music used to sing various songs newly composed by Śaṅkar. He felt an aversion to the worldly pleasures, took leave of Śaṅkardew to visit Śrīkṣetra. On the bank of the Sonkoṣ, he happened to meet Nārāyaṇ, a merchant. (Nārāyaṇ had) a princelike appearance, his body shining like gold, and had all the outer signs of a pure Brāhmaṇ. He bathed in the river and worshipped the sun with the usual rites and incantations. But Bhāskar bathed and uttered the name of Kṛṣṇa and came up presently. Bhāskar said 'What is your name? which village do you stay in? what meditation have you made just now?' Nārāyaṇ replied to the Brahman, 'I am Bhavānanda by name, and I stay in Dindā (Bar Nagar). I buy and sell things as



a merchant does.' Bhāskar added, 'You know that in the Iron Age there are really no Vedic rites (worthwhile observing). And what right have you as a Sūdra to utter the mantras?' Kali (Iron Age) has polluted all religious observances. All people have become equal being addicted to vices. There lives Śaṅkardew, an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa. He has rendered the Bhāgawat into verses. He is preaching the cult of Bhakti with the help of Nām-kīrttan (recitation of God's name) delivering the world from all sins' (vs. 2495-2504).

Nārāyaṇ felt curious, learnt all about Śaṅkardew from Bhāskar and sailed to meet him. 'So saying Bhāskar went to the west and Nārāyaṇ sailed towards the town. It made his heart good to learn about Śaṅkar and he felt a longing, day and night, to have a sight of him. As he approached Bārādi, he saw three boats floating in the down current. The persons on the boat sang, with the colophons, the songs composed by Śaṅkardew, in great joy. When he heard the name of Śaṅkardew in the colophons, Nārāyaṇ stopped his boat and enquired—'O tell me truly, where is that great Personage whose name you find in the songs.' They replied—'What for do you enquire of it? See the yonder tree, famous among people as Cūṇparā, find Śaṅkardew staying underneath that tree'. As Nārāyaṇ heard this, it so seemed to him as though he reached the moon in hand.' (vs. 2509-14).

They met and Nārāyaṇ forthwith became a sincere disciple of Śaṅkardew. His earlier name Bhavānanda was changed to Nārāyaṇ, for Śaṅkar said he naturally uttered the name of Nārāyaṇ the moment preceding their meeting. Nārāyaṇ stayed three days and nights with Śaṅkardew and learnt all about his religion and became very dear to Śaṅkardew. Then came Mādhawdew from Bārādi. The three souls met and became extremely dear to one another. Their joy knew no bounds. The ceremony of Mādhawdew's mother was performed with great pomp. An elaborate arrangement was made for Nām-kīrttan, the like of which was never witnessed by the people. *Patni-Prasād*, a drama of single Act, composed by Śaṅkardew himself, was staged on the occasion, and great enthusiasm prevailed among the audience including even those who were antagonistic to the new faith.

Nārāyaṇ then took leave of Śaṅkardew. Each was moved at heart on the occasion, though they were soon to meet. Nārāyaṇ begged to be given a religious book wherein the other members of his family might be initiated: Śaṅkardew gave him a copy of his famous work *Bhakti-Pradīp* (Garuḍa Purāṇ), which condemns the worship of other gods and extols devotion to one God (vs. 2813-19). Then came Mādhawdew with whom also Nārāyaṇ had a touching farewell. Śaṅkardew then came to reside at different places in Barpetā.

'For three months Śaṅkar stayed at Gaṇak-kuci and then left it to Mādhawa and he himself came to Kumār-kuci.' It is here that his

daughter Viṣṇupriyā died. Śaṅkardew then arranged to settle at Pātbāusi with all his followers. About this time Nārāyaṇ came once more and, staying with Mādhawadew at Gaṇak-kuchi and being accompanied by him, proceeded to meet Śaṅkardew at Kumārpār. Śaṅkardew expressed his resolve, and escorted by them, came on boat to Pātbāusi that was not far off. Mādhawadew and Nārāyaṇ returned to Gaṇak-kuchi. In all these places Śaṅkardew had his prayer-houses where regular religious councils and discussions were held.

**DAMODARDEW.** The most important event that took place at Pātbāusi is Śaṅkardew's meeting with Dāmodardew, another pillar of Assam Vaiṣṇavism.

'Hear me how Dāmodar became a disciple. Dāmodar, an honest person, was son of Dayāl. He earned his livelihood by cultivation. The stick in hand, the hoe on the shoulder, the rag in his loins, he used to go to the field every day. He had neither ploughing implements, nor bullocks, save his hoe. His cultivation used to yield him crops for six months. For the other six months he used to serve in other people's house, and with such difficulties he used to live. One day finding Dāmodar pass that way Śaṅkardew called him to him. The Brāhmaṇ turned up and stood nervously before Śaṅkar saluting and with folded hands. 'I live from hand to mouth by serving at other people's house. See, O Bap (father), I am just out for it.' Śaṅkar said, 'Hear me, O Brāhmaṇ, come bathing and serve at mine this day'. He returned again to him and kept saluting in presence of Śaṅkar. Śaṅkardew welcomed him and removed his anxiety saying "Hear the glories of Kṛṣṇa here with the other devotees, and this is the service I want to have from you."

Dāmodar was thus used to a new life. Meanwhile his wife died, and on the occasion of her funeral ceremony he got some money and things to pay homage to Śaṅkardew. Śaṅkar looked at him and said: 'I have no need of this. Do take it back home. I tell you truly, do marry again. I will help you'. Dāmodar then said with folded hands: 'I have no mind to re-marry. What better gain can I have than singing the glories of God in company of your disciples? Have mercy on me, Bāp (father), let all my former generations be delivered of sins.' So saying he prostrated at his feet. (Rām, vs. 2952-87).

Daityāri gives a similar version differing in slight details. According to him, Dāmodar's wife died long before he met Śaṅkardew and he maintained his deceased brother's wife and two nephews by cultivation. Rāmdās used to read the verse-rendering of the Bhāgawat, Book Eleven, at Pātbāusi every afternoon, and Dāmodar used to go to Rāmdās's place, put down the hoe and sit on its handle, when Rāmdās would offer him a seat. On being asked his business, he would say that he came to hear the glories of Kṛṣṇa, and Rāmdās would praise him and

read more. But one day Rāmdās directed him to the place of Śaṅkar-dew.

'On hearing this, with the hoe on his shoulder he went to cultivate the land, and presently came to the place where Śaṅkardew had been holding council with his followers, describing the glories of Kṛṣṇa with great joy. Dāmodar came and kept himself leaning against the handle of the hoe behind the wall. He would thus be hearing the glories of Kṛṣṇa for nearly two hours each day, and thus passed a month. Then one day he came before the eyes of Śaṅkardew, put his hoe and sat on the handle. Śaṅkar then asked who he was and the Bhaktas told him that this man's name was Dāmodar. On being asked why he came, Dāmodar said: 'Revered Sir, as you describe the glories of Kṛṣṇa, and as I hear them, it seems like showering of nectar'. Śaṅkardew praised him for his religious inclination, and said: 'Then, my son, it is fitting that you should be initiated to the Eka-Śaraṇ (self-surrender to One God) faith'. Dāmodar said: 'I too have a desire to be so initiated to the One.' Then Śaṅkardew asked Rām Rām to get Dāmodar initiated. Then Dāmodar Guru said: 'I am coming, father, with the hope of being initiated by you. So do not push me off to another, and do give me the initiation advice yourself.' (vs. 874-86).

It is also here at Barpeta that many other important disciples were initiated among whom were Śrīrām, Paramānanda, Balorām the junior, Mādhawa the junior, Gopāl, Mukuṇḍa, Jatirām and Gokulcānd (vs. 3002-36). No less interesting is the initiation of the king of Herhambapur which was performed through Mādhawadew (vs. 3045-50).

**SANKAR SURYA AND CAITANYA CANDRA:** Ramcaran describes Śaṅkardew's preparation for a second pilgrimage. It was not extensive and they stayed for five days only at Purī. They would go to Bṛndāban, but Mādhawa did not want it and so they returned. It is narrated that this time Śaṅkardew met Caitanyadew at Purī.

Śaṅkardew returned showing respect to Jagannāth....Chaitanyadew bathed in a village and Śaṅkardew saw him on the way. Both glanced at each other for a moment and without addressing each other, they went away'. Daityāry's version differs: (vs. 3223-40): 'They rise and walk on every morning, and thus came to the monastery of Caitanyadew...Śaṅkar, the Sun, came to where Caitanya, the Moon, stayed. Caitanya was overjoyed to hear of Śaṅkar and so came out of his abode. He looked steadily at Śaṅkar by standing at the door, and tears gently flowed past his eyes. Śaṅkar's tears flowed too in the same way and was observing him affectionately. Thus after seeing each other passionately, Caitanya entered his monastery and Śaṅkar went his way; and they spoke not to each other'. Rāmānanda too, refers to this second pilgrimage, but speaks nothing of his meeting with Rūpa and Sanātana. (vs. 890-1021). But Rāmcaran says that Śaṅkar this time met the nephew of Rūpa and Sanātana (vs. 3267-78). Evidently these are confusions of fact, and Śaṅkardew saw Caitanyadew, if at all, in this second pilgrimage.

Rāmcaraṇ states that this time Śaṅkardew and his followers visited the house of Kavīr, and found his grand-daughter and her husband (vs. 3223-26): Rāmānanda further says that this woman got Śaṅkardew's dusts of feet on her husband's turban as his blessings. (vs. 1035-40).

Daityāri (vs. 109-10) and Bhuṣaṇ describe (vs. 582-92) how homage was paid to the scholarship of Śaṅkardew by Brahmānanda, a great Vedānta scholar at Benaras who taught Kaṇṭhabhuṣaṇ, a pupil from Assam, and sent the presentation of a copy of *Ratnāvalī* to Śaṅkardew as a mark of respect to him. Sārvabhauma, another scholar of Assam at Benares, makes a confession in his own writings (Padma Purāṇ, vs. 168-214) how his teacher at Benares pointed out to him the greatness of Śaṅkardew.

AT KOC BEHAR: In the Koc Kingdom too, the malice of the Brāhmaṇs went out of bounds. On an earlier occasion they got Śaṅkardew's disciples, Gokul and Nārāyaṇ arrested at Barnagar. They were subsequently found more sinned against than sinning and were released (Daityāri, vs. 729-52). New conspiracies were now on foot and Nara Nārāyaṇ at last ordered immediate arrest of Śaṅkardew at Barpetā. Śaṅkardew met Nara Nārāyaṇ who felt much impressed by his personality, and paid Śaṅkardew all respect that the royal seat could show, and the malice of the Brāhmaṇs were rooted out once for all (vs. 753-810).

Rāmānanda describes the last days of Śaṅkardew's life at Kocbehār, with Cilārāi and Nara Nārāyaṇ, and also about the composition of his literary works there.

"Śrīmantra Śaṅkar dramatised the marriage between Rām and Sita and therein mentioned the name of Śukladhwaj incorporating it in a verse. When Śukladhwaj heard of this drama he got it and asked Śaṅkar to present a performance of it. Śaṅkardew then ordered for the players of the court and taught them all that was necessary. Śukladhwaj built a house for the performance and Śaṅkardew got his drama staged to the exceeding satisfaction of Śukladhwaj and the audience. Śaṅkardew was paid a great ovation. He came back home and stayed there for four months nearly. Śaṅkardew then made up his mind to render the twelve books of the Bḥāgawat into verses systematically. Thus he rendered books One and Two with the distinct purpose of a making the Bhakti cult widespread and such that even women and lower classes of the society could follow them. But of the book Two he only rendered two chapters (vs. 1505-13).

'One day the king called Śaṅkardew to him and spoke words soft and sweet—'I tell you truly, do initiate me to Kṛṣṇa.' Śaṅkardew wanted to evade it saying that a king cannot be initiated to Kṛṣṇa, since he is compelled to worship gods and goddesses. But once initiated to Kṛṣṇa, it is a sin to worship other deities. Such things as initiation and devotion to Kṛṣṇa are something beyond this world. 'So, O king, do abandon

this idea. You are yourself a scholar, and endowed with infinite virtues. You should not risk hell. Do take my advice, and rule your subjects confining yourself to politics.' The king replied—"The day I have said I could be initiated to Kṛṣṇa, I have left all hope in gods and goddesses, will never be addicted to any rituals, and will be devoted to Kṛṣṇa alone, sing his glory and regard you as my preceptor (vs. 1516-21).

**THE GREAT END OF SANKARDEW:** Śaṅkardew now clearly saw that it was not possible to evade like this. He took leave of him presently and said that the king might be initiated later on. The king took it for an yielding and compliance, and was glad; but Śaṅkardew was still on the look-out for a means to avoid, and was at unrest (vs. 1522-25). He at last decided:

"Nara-nāt eribāk mane kailō sār:  
Bolō teve erāibōhō hātar ihār". 1526.

"I have decided to bring the drama of human life to an end. This is how I can avoid initiating the king".

What Śaṅkardew exactly suffered from, no one truly knew. It is said that he suffered from a boil in an inconvenient part of the body. Any way he had been lying on bed for four days. Then Śaṅkardew asked Rāmānanda to make a seat for him under the holy Aswaththa tree; and when this was done, Śaṅkardew went and lay there, said his prayers and breathed his last.

"Nripati śuniā khedāilā bhūmi pāwe.  
Sewe śarīrat māyā karinamrabhāwe. 1682.  
Hari Hari kino mor bhaila birhamban.  
Āge mai rāpī kino nalailo śaraṇ.  
Ēhi buli dukh Raja anek karilā:  
Sawa śarīrat pāche śaraṇa lailā. 1683.

The king came on foot on hearing the news, with repentance. He humbly prostrated before Śaṅkardew's dead body saying—"O God, what have I done? Sinful as I am, why was I not initiated (earlier)?" So saying he much expressed his grief and even in the dead body of Śaṅkar he took his initiation. This reminds one of Rāmānuja taking initiation in the holy grave of Sathakopa.

Nara Nārāyaṇ went to his palace, ordered all preparations to be made for burning the dead body. Rāmrāi made the carrier and the four great Bhaktas Rāmrāi, Harirāi, Rām, and Harijay carried the dead body and put it on the funeral pyre on the bank of the Torśa in Kocbehār. Thus all other necessary work of the burning were completed presently (vs. 1685-92).

Daityāri's description of Śaṅkardew's death is almost similar. Every day Śaṅkardew used to go to king Nara Nārāyaṇ in the morning and to

stay with Cīlārāi in the afternoon. Then he had a boil which induced fever. On the first day of his absence in the court, the king sent man to enquire of Śaṅkardew and was informed of his illness (vs. 914-15). Bhūṣaṇ re-affirms king Nara Nārāyaṇ's initiation — "Mahāpūrushat Rājā śaraṇ paśilā" (v. 894), but being a later biographer he says this to have occurred before Śaṅkardew's death which is not borne by facts. Nara Nārāyaṇ's initiation in Śaṅkardew's dead body is unusual, but all the more natural when we remember how Rāmānuja took initiation in Sathakōpā's grave (Neog's *Mahāpuruṣaiism*, pp. 25-26).

AN UNFORTUNATE SPLIT: Śaṅkardew's passing meant the removal of the greatest personality from the field and consequent disorder. Mādhawdew succeeded to the vacant spiritual seat of Śaṅkardew by his merit as well as by the desire of Śaṅkardew and of the Vaiṣṇavas in general. Dāmodardew personally did not relish it and hence refused to attend the Guru's first annual ceremony arranged under the guidance of Mādhawdew. The latter first sent the Guru's own son demanding the former's presence. It was not obeyed. Mādhawdew then advised Nārāyaṇ himself to chastise Dāmodar if he would refuse to come: and the latter did accordingly.

'(O Dāmodar), why have you turned your back to your Master's house? Who has given you all this property? There are still traces of manual labour in your hands; and yet you have been so ungrateful to your Master Śaṅkardew! Remember how you earned your bread by manual labour from door to door, and it was Śaṅkardew who saved you from all this wretchedness. Why should you be ungrateful for all this? You should have come to your Master's house even uninvited.' On hearing all this the Brāhmaṇ became very repentant and said, 'O Nārāyaṇ, chastise me no farther. I will follow you presently. Nārāyaṇ proceeded to Mādhawdew and told him everything. Then Dāmodardew came and himself took a seat in the gathering.' (Rāmānanda, vs. 1763-67).

Sometime after the religious gathering dispersed, they discussed: 'Mādhawdew said to Dāmodar—"What creed do you follow as a religious preacher"? Tell me three things.' Dāmodar said to Mādhaw, 'I follow the Bhāgawata cult.' He told him two things more; and then Mādhawdew said—"It is just a year that the Master has departed, and your mind has changed meanwhile, as I see it. You are bent on the ritualistic faith, but in the Iron Age observance of such a faith cannot deliver people from the world. You have abandoned the Master and so I see some evil spirit misguides you. You are once more in the forest, missing your path.' So saying (Mādhawdew) gave him a pair of black cloths and told him definitely—"You may now go your own way; and you and I will have no more talk. It is for this development that you did not turn up to this first annual ceremony of the Master, and I see today what is there in your mind. You may have your faith in the path of Desire and ritualism, but you will never have us any more.' (Ibid, vs. 1731-35).

'Saying so Mādhawa maintained silence, and Dāmodar said—'A master has many servants, and they plough the field under his orders. One day the master walks round the field and shows the servant the area he has to plough, and orders him to till the ground well and raise crops following the season. Under these instructions the servant raised crops on the whole area and on some more besides. This must be a very clever servant.' He said so to Mādhawa who replied—"What more should I say? I see you would place yourself above the Master (Śaṅkardew) . . . You have exceeded the limit of the Master's teachings and you have increased the Bhakti cult more than the Master himself. You have sewed the torn cloth with your fingers than with the needle! And these are the illustrations you present before me?" Saying so Mādhaw kept silent, and Dāmodar went home. (*Ibid*, vs. 1749-54).

**SIMILAR VERSION:** Daityāri's version though agreeing essentially with the above account, gives some more details. Sometime before the first annual ceremony of Śaṅkardew, Hari Cāraṇ, his youngest son, learnt elsewhere that Dāmodardew, a minor teacher ("saru guru") superseded the genuine Vaiṣṇavism preached by Śaṅkardew, having introduced some innovations. He strongly resented this and Mādhawdew fully supported him. They waited for more proofs of Dāmodar's infidelity to the Master's teaching till his first annual ceremony which Dāmodar however did not attend. This confirmed their doubt: One day it so happened that Mādhawdew called Dāmodardew to him and asked why Dāmodar should have initiated people whom Mādhaw refused on major grounds. Dāmodardew among other things said that it was Mādhawdew who had been placed in the leadership, and not he; and so he was not bound to obey all the rules. In regard to an authority cited by Mādhawdew, Dāmodardew said that he would not obey any Purāṇas except the Bhāgawat. Then Mādhawdew referred to Ratnākar compiled by Śaṅkardew from the various Purāṇas and asked Dāmodar whether he would obey it or not. Dāmodardew replied that he would not obey even if God Himself told him so reappearing with four hands (as Viṣṇu). Then they differed and dissociated for good. (*Daityāri*, vs. 1310-31).

**MADHAWDEW'S LEADERSHIP:** Mādhawdew had since preached in different parts of West Assam such as Vijayanagar, Hājo, Nilācal. Meanwhile king Raghudew, son of Cilārāi, ordered some of his disciples to be arrested. Mādhawdew became so disgusted that he presently decided to leave this place for Tāntikuci in Barpeta whence his disciples headed by Mathurādās came and escorted him. It is here that he passed some of his days at ease and composed his dramas *Rās-jhumurā* and *Dadhimathan*, built a beautiful prayer-house and staged Śaṅkardew's *Ramvijay* (vs. 1205-89).



While still there, Brāhmanistic hostilities and conspiracies again succeeded in infuriating the king who presently ordered one Surananda to arrest Mādhawdew and his disciples. The orders were carried out, but when the Brāhmins were told that this would defeat their cause, for their vanity would be exploded and Mādhawdew's scholarship would be vindicated in stead, they themselves requested the king to take back Mādhawdew once more to Barpetā, and this was done (vs. 1410-57).

Mādhawdew was there for a month and a half this time, when again a rumour spread that sixteen Vaiṣṇavas were going to be arrested and Surānanda was employed once more on this mission. It was the month of Kārttika and Mādhawdew and his disciples left that very night for Sundaridīā where his nephew Ramcaraṇ had been. They stayed at Sundaridīā for about a month when they could gather that the rumour had no foundation. Mādhawdew now prepared to go back to Barpetā when he received orders from the king to the effect that a holy person like Mādhawdew should stay at Hājo where stands the famous temple of Hayagrīva Mādhawa. So Mādhawdew removed to Hājo in the month of Agrahāyaṇ. But it so happened that people were so much attracted by the personality of Mādhaw the living, that they almost neglected the god Hayagrīva whom they called Mādhawa the dead. Mādhawdew apprehended some danger at this, and in the month of Fālgun he left for Behār, (vs. 1459-96).

AT KOCBEHAR: Mādhawdew was received very warmly at Kocbehār by all people, high and low, who now became initiated by him. Among his new disciples are included Prince Vir Nārāyaṇ and the mother of the king himself and other princes. Princesses too became attracted by his teaching. But when Āidhāi (royal mother) desired that Mādhawdew should see the king and be formally recognised, and even when Bīru Karji, the chief officer, offered to assist him to see the king, Mādhawdew flatly refused and said that he had no business with the king. (vs. 1500-09). Then Bīru Kārji found the Sanskrit work *Nām-Mālikā* and gave three copies of the work to be rendered severally into Assamese, to a Brāhmin, to a Kāyastha, and to Mādhawdew who completed their renderings in six months, three months and half a month respectively. Bīru examined the three renderings very carefully and declared the one of Mādhawdew to be the best. (vs. 1510-12). Daityāri clearly states that Mādhawdew completed his *Nām-Ghōṣā* by adding various sub-chapters to it at Kocbehār (vs. 1513-14). On being asked whom he would nominate in his seat, Mādhawdew declared at last that he found none fit for it and recommend his *Nam Ghōṣā* as his successor. He emphasised that none but a good servant could be a good master, and hereby referred to himself on this point. (vs. 1559-71).

It so happened that two sons of Bīru Kārji who were initiated by Mādhawdew refused to partake of a feast in the house as others were not initiated. This at once created an ill-feeling of Bīru against Mādhawdew at Kocbehār. Then there came another Mādhaw from Bengal who was nothing but whom Bīru, combined with the antagonistic Brāhmins, tried to use as an instrument of torture against Mādhawdew. Then there began a religious controversy between the two Mādhawas, with Bīru and Brāhmins as judge and jury. The controversy pivoted on two points, first, whether or not a repository was essential to a rosary, and secondly, whether or not Śiva could give salvation. Mādhawdew gave his verdict on both the points in the negative while the opposite party sided the positive (vs. 1593-1602).

UNCOMPROMISING VOTARY OF TRUTH: Mādhawdew's stand was logical and scriptural, spirited and fearless. Bīru threatened Mādhawdew on pain of expulsion from Kocbehār if he would not submit; but Mādhawdew still replied in the negative. The controversy verged on violence, but was stopped by the interference of Rām Caraṇ who took away Mādhawdew to his camp. But before they departed, Bīru took a diplomatic move and very humbly requested Mādhawdew to compromise. Mādhawdew said he would not do it even if the skin of his body were removed from the foot upto the head; and he chastised Rām Caraṇ when the latter suggested a plea for evasion. (vs. 1603-36).

Then Bīru tried to poison the ears of the king against Mādhawdew saying that he had spoiled the country by preaching anti-religious doctrines. Lakṣmī Nārāyaṇ, who was then on the throne, tried the case publicly by holding a council which included several foreign scholars. Not only was Mādhawdew's guiltlessness proved to the hilt, but he was highly applauded for maintaining the correct view. The king then ordered that Mādhawdew must now be the spiritual Lord of his people while he himself would remain the temporal Lord. But Mādhawdew refused to accept this offer, and like his great Master, rather preferred to meet Death than accept the offer of the king and the royal mother though so sincere. When still Mādhawdew was repeatedly requested by the royal mother and was sent men and vehicles three times, he not only refused to go himself, but even declined to send his nephew Rāmcarāṇ. "Once again the royal mother sent royal conveyance for him, saying "I am his slave. Let him come here by this vehicle." Seeing this Mādhawdew smiled and said, "what a big man they desire to make of me! They wish to instal me as a sovereign over the Bhaktas. I must go well, if go I must".

"Punu Aidhāi pathāileka dolā diā:  
Mai bāndī āte Ātā āsok carīā.

Dekhiā Mādhawdewe hāsi bulilanta:  
 Kena bara mānusa pāṭibe moka cānta. 1670.  
 Bhaktar upari Rājā pāṭibe khojay:  
 Yāibō bhālamate yadi yāibaka lāgay. 1671.

**THE GREAT END OF MADHAWDEW:** The ambiguity of the last sentence served its purpose, for other people could not understand him. They took it literally and thought he would be prepared to just go and see the king and the royal mother. But Mādhawdew washed and dressed himself clean, came out of the house to the court-yard where he had a seat, and there lay down and breathed his last (vs. 1671-84). The news of Mādhawdew's death immediately reached the ears of the royal mother and the king, who deeply lamented the loss and made necessary arrangements for his funeral ceremony there. (vs. 1681-90). The funeral ceremony was performed by Rāmcaraṇ and other disciples who were there. (vs. 1636-91).

Daityāri mentions the year of Śaṅkardew's death as 1490 Śaka and says that Mādhawdew survived him by 28 years and giving the year of his demise as 1518 Śaka corresponding to 1596 A.D.

Cauddha śa nabai	śakat niścay
Śaṅkar Vaikunthe gailā:	
Tāta pāche āra	āthāś bachar
Mādhawdewa āchhilā.	
Pancadaśa śata	āthāra śakata
Baikuntha gailā Mādhaw:	
Śak gaṇilata	jānibā samkhyāta
Nirṇay save Vaiṣṇaw.	1716.

Neither Rāmcaraṇ nor Bhūṣaṇ deals with the event of Mādhawdew's birth since it was perhaps considered to be beyond their jurisdiction. Rāmānanda, as already quoted, describes the day in the month but not the year. Any way, the description of Rāmānanda's *Guru-Caritra* shows that it was sometime after the Bhūyās came to settle at Tembuāni or Bardowā. Lakṣmīnāth Bezbaruā, the latest biographer, opines (*Śaṅkardew*, ch. II) that Mādhawdew was born in the full moon day in the month of Jaistha in the year (1411 Śaka), 1489, probably basing his conclusions on the Bardowa *Guru Carit*. Though the month differs so slightly, the year is accepted as quite correct.

#### IV. THE CREST OF THE TIDE OF RENASCENCE

**A. BLOOM OF EPICS. SANKARDEW'S EARLIER WORKS:** The interesting poem "Karatala-kamala," attributed to the first year of Śaṅkardew's school-life, may be dated 1462. The *Kathā-Guru-Carit*, in supporting this fact, further relates that immediately after leaving his school, which

is known to have been done in his seventeenth year, Śaṅkardew wrote his *Harīścandra Upākhyān Kāvya* still extant "planting the four boundary pillars for Vaiṣṇavas", as it styles the work (p. 27). Lakṣmīnāth Bazbaruwā, his modern biographer, narrates the story, gathered from Bardowā *Kathā-Carit*, that one disciple of Śaṅkardew, Gopāl by name, used to beg alms by singing the verses from this epic, and was given profusely as the verses were extremely mellifluous. Being so reported, Śaṅkardew rather regretted that the first child of his imagination had become a beggar (Śaṅkardew, ch. X). The oft-quoted line of Daityāri, "Prathamate karilanta kīrttanara chanda", does not exclude such possibilities, as "prathamate" may mean quite a different consideration as a regular plan for composition of series of works for propagation of his faith. It does not exclude, for instance, the possibility of the composition of his epics as *Rukmiṇī Haran*, *Bhakti Pradīp*, *Orheṣā Varṇan*, *Uddhava Sambād* and his play *Cihna Yātrā*, all and sundry, which both from external and internal evidences, may reasonably be considered as Śaṅkardew's writings prior to the *Kīrttan-Ghōṣā* which is rather an anthology (Kāvya-Koṣ) than a single epic. Hence from the evidences, under contribution, *Harīścandra* may be placed about 1487, the second year after the assumption of the office of Śirōmaṇi Bhūyā by Śaṅkardew. These earlier works were probably sporadic, written at random, just to try a probationer's hand, or to give expression to the novel ideas of a budding poet-reformer; but they certainly fall in the broad scheme of Śaṅkardew's literature as a whole.

**CIHNA-YATRA:** An opera of One Act, composed in 1468, was his first literary work. Unfortunately this is not preserved as a literary work, but Rāmcaran (vs. 1451-1546), who has the support from other biographers like Sārvabhauma "Sāto Vaikuṇṭhara Cihna Yātrā karilanta" (*Padma Purāṇ*, v. 198), gives details of the composition of the songs and verses, and distribution of other matters of the drama.

Vaikuṇṭha nagar	patate lekhia
Anka karilanta tār.	1461.
Dhemālir ghōṣā	prathame lekhlā
Dwitiya śloka racilā:	
Sutra Bhattimāka	gītak kariā.
Cihna save bibhāgila.	
Yār yena thān	yimat lakṣaṇ.
Kalpataru upaban.	
Sarobarcaṇ	adhik śobhan.
Ananta sajya śobhan.	1462.
Lakṣmī Saraswatī	Caudha pāriṣad
Gītāt savake dilā:	
Śāta Vaikuṇṭhar	śat gotā Nat.

Savake tâte nirmilā.  
 Gīt Nāt Sūtra                      samaste kariā.  
 Yeve sānga karilanta;  
 Bhūyā save rabhā                  ghar sāji teve.  
 Śaṅkarat janāilanta. 1463.

He painted the city of Vaikuṇṭha in pictures and composed a drama relating to it. He wrote the preliminary chorus and secondly, composed a Sanskrit verse. He composed also Sūtra, Bhattimā and other songs, and divided them in scenes. The garden of Wish-Yielding tree, the lakes, the exquisite Bed of Eternity, he put them all in their proper places and in their native characteristics. He described the Goddesses of Wealth and of Learning and their fourteen attendants and pictured the Seven Paradises with their respective Seven Overlords in his very songs. When he thus completed the composition of the songs, the drama and the Sūtra, the Bhuyās also completed the shed for the performance and informed him.

Thus *Cihna Yātrā* may be regarded as the preamble to the first regular Assamese drama, stage and music. It must also be the first work of its kind in the whole range of modern Indo-Aryan languages. We know that in England "The Theatre" was started in 1576, its predecessors being only Council chambers, guild-halls and the yards of inn. (Ricket's *English Literature*, p. 49). We also know that *Gorbuduc*, of course a tragedy by Sackvill and Norton, played before Queen Elizabeth at White Hall in 1562, is regarded as the first English drama, its predecessors being mysteries and miracle plays. Thus in any way the first Assamese drama and stage seem to precede the English drama and stage by about a hundred years, if not more.. Rāmcaraṇ describes Śaṅkardew's initiation in making the musical instruments (vs. 1457-59), in painting scenes, besides writing out the drama and songs.

UDDHAWA SAMBĀD: The next and almost simultaneous work of Śaṅkardew with which he initiated the first band of disciples, the morning following the performance of *Cihna Yātrā*, is the poem *Uddhawa Sambād* (the message brought by Uddhawa). It was the poem composed overnight; it may not probably be the very one now included in his great work *Kīrttan* (vs. 1240-63). We have meanwhile come across another printed book, *Uddhawa Sambād* (collected and published by Bhadrāsen Bara from the Ahom press, Dibrugarh). Unfortunately the book has no title page, no name of the author, not even the date of this first impression. Curiously too, the colophons in the book do not give the author's name anywhere, but simply says—

Ayu yāi kṣaṇe kṣaṇe, Kṛṣṇar Kinkare bhane,  
 Nirantare bolā Rām Rām. 91  
 Kṛṣṇar kinkare kahe erā āna kām:  
 Pātak cārok dāki bolā Rām Rām. 157.

From such colophons and from the contents of the work one may imagine that it was the work which Śaṅkardew wrote overnight to give initiation to his first Brahman disciples.

*Uddhawa Sambād* consists of 177 verses in all, and the first poem begins with Uddhawa's lament at the thought of Kṛṣṇa's immediate departure to Vaikuntha. Uddhawa wanted to accompany Kṛṣṇa, but Kṛṣṇa said consoling:

Tumi āmi duyo gaile milibe anartha:  
Lupta haiba jñāna ito bhakatira patha.  
Adharme pīrhiba lok jāiba adhogati:  
Bhakatak rākhi tumi thākio samprati. 23.  
Jñāna karma bhakatikahilo kari bhed:  
Bhakati param path dilo paricched.  
Nāhike uttam gati bhakatit pare:  
Niṣṭa kaho bhakatise moka baśyā kare. 26.

"There will be much mischief if we both leave, for the knowledge of the cult of love may be extinct in that case. Irreligious deeds will harass people and all will be doomed. So you must stay for the time being to keep the cult of Love in tact....I have already told you the different ways of knowledge, rituals and love, and have told you also that the last is the supreme cult."

**SUPREMACY OF BHAKTI:** Uddhawa then questioned Kṛṣṇa why the sages spoke in different ways and why they were not unanimous, if love was the supreme cult. Kṛṣṇa replied:

Pūrve pralayat bhraṣṭa bhaila Vedavāṇī:  
Kahilō Brahmāt mai uddhāriā āni. 30.  
Vede yene kay tāk śunā prāṇasakhi:  
Māyāmay dewa-dharma savāko upekṣi.  
Kewale āmāt mātra laibeka śaraṇa:  
Haibe karma mālā tyaji tevese prasanna. 31  
Mai bine Vede kichu āna nabakhāne:  
Jānio Vedar tattwa artha ehi māne.  
Manut prathame Brahmā kahilā hariṣi.  
Pāche jānilanta Veda save sapta ṛṣi. 32.  
Tāta pāche pāilā Surāsur Sindhu Nāg:  
Anantare Vedak manuṣye pāilā lāg.  
Yār yena mati kare Vedak vyākhyān:  
Nij artha bhakatik tyeji buje ān. 33.  
Kehō bole Vede kay jajna—brata-dān:  
Keho bole Vede kay jñānatese gati  
Guṇar icchāye buje yār yena mati. 34.  
Kato mandamati śāstra nakare bicār.  
Kare purva dharma kula puruṣ ācār.  
Tāk eri lay kato pāṣandar mati:  
Sio mok najāne adham adhogati. 35.  
Nachhāre karmik soke dukhe prati dine:  
Jñānato nāhike gati Bhakatit biṇe.

Āne najanay ito Vedar bichār:  
Etek bhākati path sanmat āmār. 36.

'Formerly the Vedas were to be destroyed in the great Deluge. I have delivered them and told them to Brahmā. O friend, dear to me as my life itself, hear me about what the Vedas say. All the religions relating to worship of other gods are deluding; so they must be discarded, and all people should take shelter in me. Then and then alone people can be happy by purifying themselves of all dirt that rituals accompany. The Vedas describe nothing else than Me. Know this to be the essence of the philosophy of the Vedas. Brahmā communicated all this with a glad heart to Manu first; then the seven sages knew the Vedas. Then all the gods and demons and Sindhu and Nāgs knew the Vedas till they reached men at last. Men interpret the Vedas at their sweet will and leave away their true purport which is *bhakti*, and understand things else than this. Some say that the Vedas prescribe sacrifices, fasting and gifts; others say that it is worship of gods and pilgrimage, etc. that they mean; still others say that the Vedas prescribe knowledge as the only way of deliverance, and thus they interpret after their own minds. There are evil-minded persons who do not consult the scriptures, but follow stale customs, and there are other vile persons who would not observe either. Such mean persons do not know Me and are of course doomed. Those who observe rituals cannot escape sorrows and miseries from day to day. Even knowledge cannot give deliverance without Love. Others do not know the truth revealed in the Vedas, namely, the cult of love which I so much approve.'

Jagatar dharma karma karok sakale:  
Mohe ātmā buli yadi jāne yogabale.  
Tathāpi pavitra tār nohe tanu citta:  
Nerāi mrityu-bhay jnānī karmī kadācita. 49.  
Napāway mok yāg-yog yajna dāne:  
Mahā mantra japi koti śata tirtha snāne.  
Napāwe āmāk ekādaśī upabāse:  
Nakarai vāśya mok param sanyāse. 59.  
An karma kariā michāte mare lok:  
Bhakatar sangese samyake jāne mok. 60.  
Dewato tirthato kari bhakatase bar:  
Bhakatak bhajile gucay karma-jwar. 65.  
Thākohō sarvada mai tāsambar pās.  
Yei bole sei karo jena nija dās. 71.

'Let a person perform all religious deeds or rituals in the world, let him know Me to be God by means of deep meditation, yet his body and mind cannot be pure; and those who follow the path of knowledge and rituals can never escape the fear of death.... One cannot attain Me through sacrifices, meditations, gifts, incantations nor through fasting. None can command Me by great renunciation. People trouble themselves for nothing by doing other things. My true devotees alone can find Me perfectly well. Bhaktas are nobler than gods, nobler than sacred places. All the vices accompanying rituals are removed by serving Bhaktas. I am ever at the beck and call of the Bhaktas. I do their bidding like their own slave.'



Jnāne gati kahe Veda                      laio tār pariccheda,  
                                  Āche jnān Bhakatir mājē:  
 Bhakati karante jnān                      āpuni opaje tār,  
                                  Yog cinti mare michā kāje. 84.

Putra dārā bisayat kare mātra rati.  
 Nalay santar sang mot nāi mati.  
 Yadi cāri Ved caudha śāstrat pārgat:  
 Tathāpi sito mūrkhā jānā mor mat. 110.  
 Jagatar antaryāmi āche hridayat:  
 Tathāpi karmīt mai nuhikō bekat.  
 Āmāk nedekhe mahā karma ahankāre:  
 Yena ādityak dhāke kuwali āndhāre. 118.

'There is no use worrying about meditations. . . Knowledge comes of itself when one is engrossed in love. The Vedas thus show how knowledge is an instrument in attaining salvation. . . A person may be well-versed in the Vedas and in the fourteen scriptures, but if he is only addicted to sons, wives and other worldly pursuits and does not seek the company of the noble and has no leaning towards Me, then I would call him a great fool. . . I know all that is going on in the hearts of people, for there I live. But I do not express myself in those who are addicted to ritualism. They do not see me due to their pride in the pomp of rituals, as the sun is kept hidden by darkness if mist.'

ORESA VARNAN is another epic mentioned by *Kathā-Guru-Carit* as one among the earliest works of Śaṅkardew (p. 46) probably written soon after his pilgrimage to Puri. It was rendered from the *Brahma Purāṇa* and it describes how king Indraduymna made the *Aśvamedha* sacrifice and the temple at Orissa, with other connected incidents. It contains as many as twenty three poems with 246 verses, and includes such oft-quoted lines:

Caitanya svarūpe vyāpī eka Niranjan:  
 Tomāka bulibe dvaita kona ajnajan.

'Thou art One as Niranjana pervading all as Consciousness. What ignorant person is there who would call you dual.' The last two poems are particularly beautiful and are often sung in religious gatherings as they describe the glory of recitation of God's attributes, with the excellent chorus:

Kṛṣṇa Sūrya vailanta uditā:  
 Nām Dharma Karila viditā.

'The Phoebus of Kṛṣṇa is in the horizon. The Nām Dharma (Faith in God's Name) is made known.'

The most curious thing about this epic is that it has ever been attached to the *Kīrtan-Ghoṣā* in the "appendix" after Ratnākar Kandalī's '*Sahasra Nām Vṛtānta*' and Śrīdhara Kandalī's '*Ghunuṇā Yātrā*.'

This question also involves another question, why the other two epics in particular of the two poets were always attached to the *Kīrtan-Ghoṣā* as appendix. What is naturally suggested to the mind is that the other two epics, and "Sahasra Nām Vṛtānta" in particular, have a special dignity that entitles them to be given this privilege. *Orheṣā Varṇan*, though it is Śaṅkardew's own writing, contains some verses on idol worship, as stated by the *Brahma Purāṇ*, that may lead to a misunderstanding in some quarters; so it was not included but kept in the appendix by Mādhaw probably for the beauty at least of the last two poems.

**HARISCANDRA UPĀKHYAN:** The theme of Hariścandra is well known as a mythological story; but Śaṅkardew uses it for his Vaiṣṇavite propaganda.

Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇar kāthate pradhān:  
Payāre racibo Hariścandra Upākhyān. 2.  
Viṣṇu Vaiṣṇavar kathā duyo samatul:  
Śravan-kīrtane karā pāpar nirmūl.  
Candāl parjyante kare savāke pavitra: 4

'Discourses on Vaiṣṇavas and those on Viṣṇu are alike in merit; if you hear or sing them, all vices are rooted out. Down to an outcaste all people are sanctified. So do, one and all, hear the glories of the Vaiṣṇava.

Hariścandra, one of the greatest and happiest of kings, desired to perform a sacrifice. The trouble arose when as usual Vasiṣṭha asked him to start by worshipping Gaṇeś which the king refused to do.

Prathame bolanta pūjioka Gaṇapati:  
Rājāye bolanta Guru kamane juguti:  
Param puruṣ Hari tānka eri āge:  
Kibā guṇe Gaṇeśak pujibāk lāge. 25.  
Jagatar nāth saṁsārār ādi mūl:  
Viṣṇuk pūjibo prathamate diā ful.  
Viṣṇut arpibo yata puṇyā yajna dān.  
Viṣṇu byatireke dewa najānoho ān. 26.  
Hari tuṣṭa bhaile tuṣṭa howe caracar.  
Hena Viṣṇu eri pujiboho Lambodar. 27.  
Basiṣṭha vadati śunā nṛpati pradhān:  
Gaṇeśak kisak karāhā etamān.  
Nṛpati bolanta Guru nubulibo mok;  
Mādhawak ārādhile yena lāge hok. 28.  
Bighnar śaṅkāye nupūjibo Hṛṣikeś:  
Okanik bhaye kone muṇḍi āche keś. 29.  
Vasiṣṭha lailanta ano riṣit saṁmati:  
Gaṇeśak eri pujilanta Lakshmipati. 30.

'Vasiṣṭha first said, '(O king), worship Gaṇeś'. The king said, 'Preceptor, how is it? Why should I worship Gaṇeś first, leaving Kṛṣṇa

the soul of all?' I must worship Viṣṇu first, with flowers, for He is the Lord of the world and the great Source of the Universe. I must dedicate all sacrifices, all worships and all gifts to Viṣṇu, for I know no god other than Viṣṇu. The world will be pleased if Viṣṇu alone is pleased. Should I now worship Ganeś leaving Viṣṇu alone.... Vaiśiṣṭha said—'Oh, the greatest among kings, why do you neglect Ganeś?' The king said; 'O priest, do not tell me so. I am prepared for what may come out of the worship of Viṣṇu alone. Can it be that I shall not worship Viṣṇu for fear of dangers (from other gods)? Does one shave his head for fear of lice? Vaiśiṣṭha then took the consent of other sages, and worshipped Viṣṇu without worshipping Ganeś.'

RUKMINI HARAN KAVYA appears to be another early work of Śaṅkardew, and Śaṅkardew must have composed it while he stayed at Tembuani or at least at Belguri or Dhuyānhāt. We have little external evidence to support our view; but there appears to be much internal evidence to confirm our belief. Śaṅkardew commences this work with such verses:

Kṛṣṇa pada pankaja yugala mane dhari:  
Gurur caraṇ mane namaskār kari.  
Harivaṃsa kathā kavi Śaṅkare samprati:  
Rukmini Harana padabandhe nigadati. 4.  
Eke Harivaṃsa kathā amṛta sāksāt.  
Āro Bhāgawata kathā miśra dilō tāt.  
Duyo kathā padabandhe karichō milāi:  
Yena madhu miśra dugdhe ati swād pāi. 5.

'Poet Śaṅkar narrates the story of the Rape of Rukmiṇī in verse from the Harivaṃsa by keeping the pair of lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa in his heart and saluting the feet of the preceptor in mind. The narrations of Hari-vaṃsa are nectarine by themselves. And I have made a mixture of it with the descriptions of the Bhāgawat. I have mixed up the two in verse, and it must be very sweet like milk mixed with honey.'

Indeed it is. But nowhere in later works Śaṅkardew styles himself "Kavi Śaṅkar" nor does he make such apology in the beginning. Another fact pointing to the above conclusion is his indulgence in many a simile for the same thing, and his verbosity. On the proposal of Rukmini's marriage to Sisupal, she bursts into saying:

Candrak dhariba khoje śiśu hāt meli:  
Amritak bānche yen cukar bhekuli.  
Sehimate āśā Śiśupālar āmāk:  
Yena yajna bhog bhunjibāk cāhe kāk. 89.  
Mahādān khoje yen patit Brāhmaṇe:  
Viśiṣṭa swargak bānche Brahmabadhigāṇe.  
Sehi mate āśā Śiśupal nṛpatir:  
Tār mukhe swāmī haile pāwe Rikmiṇīr. 90.  
Sipha eri śrgālak bhaje kon prāṇi:  
Dugdha eroi kon jane khāy khār-pāṇi. 91.

'Śiśupal's ambition for my hands is like a child stretching his hands up to catch the moon, or like a frog in the corner of the house hankering after ambrosia. King Śiśupal may win the hands of Rukmiṇī in marriage by his words alone, for his desire is like that of a crow desiring for share of Sacrifices, or that of a fallen Brāhman aspiring after a great gift or a Brāhmicide hoping to find a special heaven for himself. He may marry by his words as the jackal can aim at the lioness. What being is there that would serve a jackal in preference to a lion or would take soda water in preference to milk.'

The autobiographical note occurring in the middle of the work appears to be another testimony to the fact that Śaṅkardew was yet a novice in the art of poetry (vs. 527-530). Also his apology for his verses and his referring to himself as "ati sisumati" (too childish) show that what in age and what in his experience he was yet far from sure of his power, and still less of having a mastery or even self-confidence. It is not humility alone which he does not show in his mature works. The concluding verses (790-92) finally confirm it.

**TREMENDOUS POPULARITY:** But the very fact of *Rukmiṇī Haraṇ Kāvya* being written in Śaṅkardew's early youth may account for its tremendous popularity which is evidenced by at least two or three dozen of its verses being used like Assamese proverbs even in the mouths of illiterate persons who may know little of the *Kāvya* itself (Neog's *A.S.B.*, 4th ed., pp. 335-36). Also this *Kāvya* appears to have wielded immense influence over contemporary poets like Ananta Kandali (*Ibid.*, pp. 336-37).

Though taken from the *Hari-vamśa* and the *Bhāgawat*, the *Kāvya* has been cast in a perfectly Assamese setting for which the sublime poetic genius of Śaṅkardew is responsible. (*Ibid.*, pp. 337-40). Like any Assamese mother, Śaśī-prabhā is over-anxious for her daughter as she grew up in age:

Rukmiṇī jiarīr āve bhaila kanyā kāl;  
Bicario bar Rajā yaita āche bhāl.  
Sāta pānca nahi mor jiu eka guti;  
Kenamate āse prabhu niścinte ghumati.  
Rukmiṇī sadrs̄ bar cāhio sakāl;  
Rūpe guṇe cāi Yen daśe bole bhāl.  
Bhāl cāi diba Daibe yehi lāge hok.

'Our daughter Rukmiṇī has now attained puberty. So, O king, find out a suitable bridegroom for her. I am not the mother of as many as seven or five female children; she is my only daughter; so how can I, O king, sleep peacefully? Be up and doing to find out a bridegroom worthy of Rukmiṇī, so that what by form and what by virtues all may call the match admirable. We cannot be put to blame if we do our best now to join her hands with those of one worthy of her, whatever there be in store for her future.'

**MAGICAL DESCRIPTIONS:** Though an early composition, Śaṅkardew yet displays his magic power of poetical description in various phases.

Rūpa dekhi briksho munjarila save  
 Basante neray kol;  
 Puṣhpar surabhi gandha lobhe ati  
 Bhramare karay rol. 271.  
 Sugandhī sītal malay pawan  
 Bahe samastake dhāki;  
 Alpa alpa kari amṛt sinchila  
 Meghe akāśt thāki....  
 Kathamapi Hari āsi dhajya dhari  
 Thir karilanta citta;  
 Haribāka prati Mādhawar mati  
 Kare ati pita pita. 377.

'All the trees began to blossom on seeing the beauty (of Rukmiṇī). The spring season would not leave her company. The blackbees began to hum being allured by the fragrance of the flowers. Gentle and fragrant air began to blow over all, and the clouds began to shower nectar in particles....Kṛṣṇa controlled himself with great difficulty, for his mind was all the time prompting him to take away Rukmiṇī.'

Śaṅkardew even at this early stage gives enough evidence of this magic power and condensed description. He speaks of the people drinking the beauty of Kṛṣṇa with their eyes—"Bāhuwe ālingi netre kare pān—" as the great Vālmīki speaks of people drinking Rāma's beauty frequently with their eyes—"Cakṣubhih piyante muhurmuḥuh". He also compares Rukmiṇī sitting by the side of Kṛṣṇa in the chariot as the rising of the moon in the Poles:

Eka pāse rathat basilā bara bālā:  
 Meruta uḍita yena candramār kalā.

While she was dressed to make her appearance before the audience of kings, she is said to have surpassed the heavenly damsels in as much as the moon outdoes the stars:

Rukmiṇīr āgat kichu nohe apesarā:  
 Candrar āgat yen najwalay tara.

Even in referring to Rukma, the eldest son of Bhīṣmaka, bleeding by the showers of arrows on him, Śaṅkardew describes him as a Mandāra tree full of blossoms in the Spring season:

Prakāse Kumār basanta kālar  
 Puṣpita yena mandār.

The comic element is also not wanting in the epic. Vedanidhi, the messenger of Rukmiṇī, on his return journey in the chariot of Kṛṣṇa lost his sense, his stomach being puffed up with air due to extreme speed. Now when Kṛṣṇa took care of him and asked whether he felt better,

the Brahman was delirious and said that he did not know Kṛṣṇa nor he knew himself; and it is described by Śaṅkardew so humorously.

Aneka āśwās kari Mādhawe ciānta;  
Tathāpito cakṣu meli Brāhmaṇe nacānta. 157.  
Nicinohō tomāk tumi bā kona jana;  
Kaira hante āsi ācho kothera Brāhmaṇa.  
Kona sthāne pari āchō kikāraṇe āsi. 158.

Again when fighting with kings, Baloram who always had the plough as his symbol is described as pulling the enemies with his plough:

Kāhāko lāngal diā ājoranta Rām:  
Ānkusi lagāiā yena jhokāranta ām.

Also when Rukma's head was shaved to put on him a mark of some permanent insult, he is said to have looked like a big monkey:

Kapālat rekhā diā pindhāilanta fot.  
Rukmak dekhiā yen halau pasu got.

The whole work is interspersed with such humorous descriptions where there is a chance for them.

**THE HUMAN ELEMENT:** Śaṅkardew's description of Śaśiprabha and others leaving Rukmiṇī in her father-in-law's house is very true to life and reminds every Assamese reader of exactly such touching farewells occurring in Assamese social life:

Bhīṣmako larilā	Kundilaka prati,
Jamāit melāni lai.	
Daivakir hāt	dhariā bolanta
Śaśiprabhā mahadai.	
Pānca putra māje	jīu eka khāni,
Samyake mohora jīwa:	
Kābau karō herā	pāliba Gosānī,
Tomārehe bhaila jīwa. 783.	
Suwāgat mor	bārhil Rukmiṇī
Ghare kare nite roṣ:	
Dhāki rākhi tumi	āpuni cahibā
Maraṣiba daś doṣ. 784.	
Tomār hātāt	sampilō jīwak.
Karilo herā melāni:	
Māwak jāibar	dekhi Rukmiṇī
Nayanar pare pānī.	
Anek prakāre	bujhāi Rukmiṇīk
Ulatāi pathāila ghar.	
Pāche Sumālinī	Dhāi Mādhawak
Bolay kari kātār. 785.	
Kalāye bokāye	tulilohō dukhe,
Sukha diā mok Āi.	
Caraṇat dharō	kātār karōho
Pālibā tumi Gōsāi. 786.	

'Bhīṣmaka took leave of his son-in-law to make for Kuṇḍil. Queen Śaśiprabhā caught hold of the hand of Devaki (Kṛṣṇa's mother) and said, '(Rukmiṇī) is my only daughter amidst five sons. So she is like my life itself. O Madam, I entreat you to treat her tenderly, for she is now like your own daughter. My Rukmiṇī was brought up in great affection. She becomes sullen at home every day. Do hide her defects and shelter her yourself and pardon her faults ten times a day. I bid you good-bye and leave her entirely in your hands. On seeing her mother leave, Rukmiṇī shed tears. She consoled and persuaded Rukmiṇī on various ways to go back home. At last came Sumalinī, the nurse of Rukmiṇī, and thus entreated Kṛṣṇa: "In weal or woe, and in pleasure or pain, I brought Rukmiṇī up with great care. I catch your feet and pray so humbly, do keep her kindly, O Lord". Thus ended "Pātaka tāraṇ Rukmiṇī Haran" the Epic that can free one from sins, and—

    Ihār śrawan                      Kīrtane, sāksāte                      Sādhay param gati.  
'The hearing and singing of it can presently accomplish great deliverance'.

BHAKTI PRADIP: Śaṅkardew presented his *Bhakati Pradīp* or *Garuḍa Purāṇ* to Bhavānanda alias Nārāyaṇ at the latter's request, after he became Śaṅkardew's disciple at Chunpara near Barpetā. Apparently this must be a work written by Śaṅkardew at Dhuyānhat or Belguri where he stayed for fourteen years. This is a work complete in 313 verses, the facts being taken from *Garuḍa Purāṇ* which brings out its topic in the form of a discourse between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna just as the Gītā is told: "Garuḍa Purāṇ Kṛṣṇa Arjun sambād:" Like most of Śaṅkardew's writings, it is almost an original work and he writes freely, of course without departing from the main theme of his source.

The *Katha Guru Carit* also refers to *Bhakati Pradīp* as another early work of Śaṅkardew like the *Rukmiṇī Haran Kāvya* (p. 35). In theme and treatment it is a companion of *Hariścandra Kāvya*, and a free work. It is a copy of this work that was presented to Narayan Thakur, as earlier told. The plot begins when for the performance of the Rājasuya sacrifice various sages assembled and by the way had a discourse on the comparative merit of religious performances:

Yata Dewarīṣi Rajarīṣi Brahmarīṣi:  
Bhailanta ekatra sehi sabhāt hariṣi. 10.  
Yajne dāne brate mokṣa kāhāro yuguti:  
Kehō bole mahā jñān yogat mukuti.  
Kehō bole sādhe gati ei Rājasui;  
Angira Nārade bulialanta kichu nui. 11.  
Jñān karma Yogak karanto maha kaṣṭa:  
Alpa chidre kare tāk tetikṣaṇe bhrāṣṭa.  
Rājasuya kari yeve Brahmaloce care:  
Puṇya kṣay bhaile dunāi saṁsārat pare. 12.  
Bance Brahma lokat ācāri tapa yog:  
Nāhi eko sukh indriyar mātra bhog.  
Māyāmay dewa dharma samaste bināṣi:  
Āto mokṣa āche śuni uthe mor hāsi. 13.



'All the god-sages, king-sages and Brahma-sages gladly assembled on that occasion. Some of them opined that sacrifices, gifts and fasting could bring about salvation. Others said that salvation could be had by the great cult of knowledge. Yet others maintained that the Rājasūya if duly performed may raise its performers to Brahmālōka, but when the merits are spent up he again drops down to the world. Besides, when by meditations etc. a person stays in the Brahmālōka, he has no bliss, but has sensual gratifications in it. All such faiths relating to gods are ephemeral, and full of illusions. It makes me laugh to hear that such religions can bring about salvation.'

**SUPERIORITY OF BHAKTI:** Kṛṣṇa corroborated this last view.

Bolanta Keśave śunā uttar ihār:  
 Hauka nara yadyapi param durācār.  
 Moke mātra bhajay nupūji dewa ān:  
 Tathāpi param sādhu sei mōr prāṇ. 34.  
 Nabādhay doṣe tāk tejiō śamśay:  
 Satye satye dibō mokṣa sakhi Dhananjay.  
 Anācār kari aparādhi mor nuhi:  
 Ān deva pūje yito sei mor drohī. 35.  
 Mahāmokṣadātā mot pare nāhi kew:  
 Tathāpito teji mok pūje ān dew.  
 Yito mahā mlechha khāi kukurak mārī:  
 Tāto kari apavitra sito ahankāri. 36.  
 Dekhi bur diba lāge nāi āt citra;  
 Cāṇḍālaro aspriśya sehise apavitra.  
 Mai nij pitṛk karile apamān:  
 Brahmāndat nāi pāpī tāhār samān. 37.

'Kṛṣṇa says—'Hear my answer to this. Be a person a big rogue, but if he worships Me and Me alone, and never worships other gods he must be a great saint and dear to Me as my life. No defects can stop him, know it for certain, and I tell you most truly, O Arjun, that I will deliver him from this world. One cannot be sinful to Me by violating moral rules, but one becomes a sinner to me by worshipping other gods. I am the Giver of salvation and there are none of power else than Me; if in spite of this a person worships other gods in preference to Me, then he must be more despised than one who kills dogs to eat their flesh. There is nothing to wonder that one who suffers the sight of such a person should purify one by diving in water. Such a wretch is impure and is untouchable even for an outcaste; for he insults Me who am his own Father. There can be no sinner worse than him.'

This however did not convince Arjuna who asked forthwith:

Tomāk nupūji ān deva pūji  
 Cāṇḍālatodhika howe;  
 Hena biparīta kaito natu śuni  
 Cāṇḍālo tāka nochowe. 45.

'I have never heard such contradictory things that a person may become worse than an outcaste, rather untouchable for even an outcaste, by worshipping other gods in preference to you.' Kṛṣṇa then told Arjuna

an interesting incident how an outcaste woman who was devoted to Him actually dived in the sacred Ganges hundred and eight times, and also took to what may be called 'internal washing' by reciting one thousand and one names of Kṛṣṇa in repentance, simply for talking with a Brahman who used to worship other gods in preference to Viṣṇu. Meanwhile came Nārada:

Tolanta yantrat nād amṛt susvar:  
 Āpuni gāwanta gīt kaṇṭhe kokilar. 78.  
 Jagat pavitra howe śuni Rām bāṇī:  
 Kāṣṭho drave atīśay śila srave pāṇī.  
 Bṛkṣasavo munjare śarīr romāncit:  
 Ānande hiāt honta Īśvar bidit. 79.

'In his musical instrument he raised a sweet note that showered nectar, and he himself sang with the voice of a cuckoo. The world becomes sanctified to hear the glories of Rām. The wood softens and the stone melts into water. The trees blossom and the body feels a thrill of pleasure. And God reveals Himself through joy in hearts.'

Nārada, who knew all about the outcaste woman, burst into saying:

Dhanya dhanya Cāṇḍālinī mati ye uttam:  
 Nedekhilō Bhakat param toka sam.  
 Nīścay jānili tattva Kṛṣṇa devatār:  
 Tor daraśane bhailō āmio nistār. 93.  
 Cārio Vedar tattva tai acha jāni.  
 Taisi uttam jāti tai mahā mānī,  
 Tirthak pavitra karā āt kon citra;  
 Tor sanga pāile huiba jagat pavitra. '94.

'Glory to you, O outcaste woman. Yours is the happiest intellect. I have never come across a devotee equal to yourself. You have known the real mystery of love of Kṛṣṇa. We are also delivered from this world by your sight. It is you who have known the real philosophy of the four Vedas. You do really belong to the best of the castes. You are truly worthy of respect. What wonder is it that you can sanctify the sacred places themselves. The world can be purified by enjoying your company.'

There is yet another work in print (by Agency Company, Dibrugarh) styled as *Garuḍa Purāṇ* with Śaṅkardew's colophons. It consists of 149 verses or half-verses and is written as a discourse between Kṛṣṇa and his Vāhan (carrier) Garuḍa, mainly on the relation between disciples and preceptors. The verses bear the dignity of Śaṅkardew composition and we find little in it to call anything spurious. It may be that this is another part of the *Garuḍa Purāṇ* to the other part of which is given the name of *Bhakti Pradīp*.

UTTARAKANDA RAMAYAN: Śaṅkardew's writing of the *Uttara Kāṇḍa*, both from its reference in the *Kathā-Guru Carīt* and from the style and auto-biographical note appears to have been done which was at Dhūyātāt.

The *Descriptive Catalogue* names three more works Vaiṣṇavāmṛita, Utkalamala and Kurukṣetra as belonging to Śaṅkardew (p. 2). The first is apparently a mistake, for the author of *Vaiṣṇavāmṛt* is Ananta Kandalī and not Śaṅkardew. *Utkalamala* we have not come across nor have we any reference to this work. But we have reference of the third work *Kurukṣetra*, in Ramcharan's (Bk. V).

Rukmiṇī Haran jagat tāraṇ  
Kurukṣetra āro kalia.  
Kariā pravandha sehi bāra skandha.  
Gīt āro viracila. (v. 3420).

The *Descriptive Catalogue of Assamese Manuscripts* (pp. 1-2) names nineteen books as composed by Śaṅkardew, and includes such names a *Nām-Mālikā* (?*Rām Mālikā*), Prem-Kalasi Ghoṣā (?*Rukmiṇī Prem Kalah*) as belonging to Śaṅkardew. It is unfortunate that the learned compiler should have attributed to Śaṅkardew such clearly spurious works as these. "Rukmiṇī Prem-Kalah", as already noted, is an interpolation in some recent collections of the *Kīrttan-Ghoṣā*. The poems contain the colophons of Śaṅkardew apparently, but they are not genuine. Besides the subject matter, the language lacks the serenity and sublimity of Śaṅkardew and even the metre is poor and unworthy of Śaṅkardew (vs. 1531-35) may serve for illustration.

Mention of *Nām-Mālikā* as Śaṅkardew's work must be a mistake of fact. There is another distinctly spurious work named *Rām-Mālikā*, written apparently with an ulterior motive.

VERSE RENDERING OF THE BHAGAWAT: In respect of the epics on the Bhāgvat it may be mooted whether Śaṅkardew first tried his hand for the independent works or for the *Kīrttan-Ghoṣā*. One outstanding fact must at all times be borne in mind that either way they were never slavish imitations or even literal translations so called; nor did he deviate from the main themes to deform them, but he always rather reformed them in his own way and for his own purpose by enhancing new things and compelling them to be considered almost as original by the alchemy of genius. His colophon in the *Rukmiṇī Haran Kāvya*, already quoted may be compared with that of his *Anādi Pātan*.

Sṛṣṭi sthiti lay Mādhawar mokṣa līlā:  
Kṛṣṇar Kiṅkare pad Śaṅkare racila. 5.  
Mahābhāgawat pad amṛt sāksāt:  
Bāman Purāṇ Kichu miśra dilō tāt.  
Dui kathā nivandhilō ekatre misale:  
Madhu same dugdha yena ati svāda bole. 6.  
Śunā sāwadhān mane yata sabhāsad:  
Tṛitiya skandhar Mahā Bhāgawata pad.  
Yena mate bhailā ito Ānādi Pātan. 7.

The former theme he takes from *Harivaṃśa* first which he styles as nectar itself and incorporates the *Bhāgawat* elements into it, and calls it a compound of milk and honey that is Śaṅkardew's own. This latter theme he takes from the *Bhāgawat* first, which he again styles as nectar itself and incorporates the *Bāman Purāṇ* elements into it, and calls it a compound of honey with milk, that is again Śaṅkardew's own. One of his biographers, Rāmānanda, makes a categorical statement about some of Śaṅkardew's epics on the *Bhāgawat*:

Tini Skandha cāi, vicāriā pāy, eka Skandha sei kathā:  
Bācakbaṇiā, sadāgara yen, eka thāi kari tathā. 3417.

'What is to be found about in as many as three Skandhās (of the *Bhāgawat*) has been put in one Skāndhā (by Śaṅkardew), just as the skilful merchant would gather the selected ones (gems) together.' This is what may be meant by originality in art. Those who would superficially dub Śaṅkardew as a mere translator should take a note of this fact.

ANADI PATAN is complete in 300 verses. Although this work belongs to the Book Three of the *Bhāgawat*, the different poems end with such lines in prose as "Iti Śrī Bhāgawata-Mahā Purāṇa caturtha Skāndhe Prathamah (dwitīyah?, tritīyah āru charturthah) adhyāyah" saying that it is taken from the first four chapters of the Book Four of the *Bhāgawat*. Other chapters of the Book Three are known to have been rendered by Gopāl Dwija under orders of Śaṅkardew.

BRHAT AJAMIL UPAKHYAN: Śaṅkardew also rendered separately the first part of the *Bhāgawat* Book Six, *Brhat Ajāmīl Upākhyān*, and got the latter part rendered by Ananta Kandali as *Brtrāsūr Badh* and with the usual invocation to Kṛṣṇa and dwells on the horrors of death in 375 verses in all. It consists of about 20 poems. The first poem begins and speaks of a dead body as "Guri katā gach yen pari thāke ati" (v. 8, lying down like a tree that has been felled by cutting near the root). Again,

Yena dhuāileka hāti,      dunāi lawe kutā-māṭi,  
    Śarīrat bāndhe ati mal:  
Kehō belā ere pāp,      kehō belā kare tāk,  
    Prāicitta eteke bifal. 55.

'Atonements prove futile, and is like an elephant which after being washed may for sometime refrain from, but mostly relapses into the habit of besmearing his body with dust.' All through the work Śaṅkardew shows such an ease and mastery over his subject that one forgets it is from a Sanskrit work.

Śaṅkardew rendered separately also the Eighth Book of the *Bhāgawata* giving a gist of it in 616 verses as *Bali chalan*. It is also

re-inforced with the ideas of Bāman Purāṇ: Śaṅkardew himself writes:

Mahahā Bhāgawat kathā śunā sarvajan:  
Aṣṭam Skāndhar sār Balik chalan. 4.  
Bhāgawat kathā ito amṛt sāksāt:  
Bāman Purāṇ kichu miśra dilō tāt.  
Duyo kathā nivandhilō kari ek thāi  
Yena madhu miśre dugdha swād bārhi yāi. 5.

From the apologetic tone of the beginning of his work, it appears to be an earlier work.

Karayore bolō śunā save sabhāsad:  
Mahā mūrha huyā karō Bhāgawat pad. 6.  
Kardame miśrit yadi howe Gangā jal:  
Tāto nimajile āche mahā mokṣa fal. 7.

The autobiographical colophon (353-55) supports the view. Śaṅkardew's picture of Bali, stronger in his helplessness and better fortified in his wretchedness, is marvellous.

Trailokyā Lakṣmī mor kārhi lailā chalee:  
Garuḍar pāse bāndhi thailā hāte-gale.  
Nagaṇohō isava dukhak gāwe sahe:  
Bulilā asatyabādī ise dukhe dahe. 433.  
Tumi yeve jāna mor satya bhailā channa:  
Māthā pāti deō tāte thāpio caraṇa. 435.  
Bhāl bhaila gučila biṣay mahā biṣ;  
Niskincan bhailo mor adhike hariṣ. 436.  
Yateka bolāhā mor nālare matik:  
Tomār krodhat dekho barato adhik. 439.

'You have snatched away the Goddess of Wealth of the three worlds from me by a trick and have fastened me hard with the strings of Garuḍa by my hands and neck. I do not mind these; for my body can tolerate all this. But you call me 'untruthful' and this pains me most. If you think I have failed in truth, then I place my head, and you put your feet on it. It is well that you have removed the great poison of worldiness from me and I am glad the more that I have become penniless. All your reproaches cannot remove my determination, and I consider your wrath to be better than your blessings.'

REMAINS OF SANKARDEW'S FOOD: Śaṅkardew's rendering of the Tenth Book of the Bhāgawat, part one, known as Daśam is celebrated like his Kīrttan Ghoṣa. The Bardowā prose biography of Śaṅkardew relates an incident in regard to the rendering of this work. Ananta Kandali, a great poet and a Brahman disciple of Śaṅkardew, one day approached the great Master and begged of him the remains of his food, which appears to be a common desire of all devoted disciples.

We find exactly the same story in Rāmānujācārīya's life, who being a Brāhman by caste, longed and made various sincere efforts to eat the remains of food of Kāncipūrṇa, by birth considered untouchable.

While Kāncipūrṇa cleverly avoided this anti-social practice altogether, Śaṅkardew evaded it skilfully in another way. By this time he finished the rendering of the first part of the Book Ten of the Bhāgawat; the middle and the last part were yet to be done, and Śaṅkardew explained to Ananta Kandalī that here were the remains of his food, and Ananta Kandalī might take it. The latter gladly took this interpretation of his dream and soon applied himself to it. He completed these works but only after Śaṅkardew's death which fact appears from a single line in his colophon: "Kṛṣṇa smari mari sthit bhaila Vaikuṇṭhat."

Śaṅkardew also rendered the Eleventh and the Twelfth Books of the Bhāgawat. The latter is given as a gist in 539 verses, and the former as *Nimi Nava Siddha Sambād*. Rāmānanda makes a particular mention of this work in his biography (vs. 1425-45), in connection with the event how Śaṅkardew came by the *Bhakti Ratnāvalī*. Kaṇṭhabhuṣaṇ, the son-in-law of Rām-rām Guru, Śaṅkardew's constant companion, went to study the Vedānta philosophy at Benares, under one teacher Rām Bhatta by name. He had a copy of Śaṅkardew's *Nimi Nava Siddha Sambād* with him; and before day-break he used to recite verses from it in the hostel. Rām Bhatta heard this very attentively, came to the hostel and enquired of Kaṇṭha Bhuṣaṇ who had made this very excellent rendering of the Bhāgawat. Rām Bhatta being told all about Śaṅkardew advised him to leave forthwith to be in the feet Śaṅkardew for further studies, and sent his respectful present of a copy of the *Ratnāvalī* to Śaṅkardew.

**BHAKTI RATNAKAR:** Śaṅkardew meanwhile compiled his great work *Bhakti Ratnākara* in Sanskrit. When he saw this work by Viṣṇupuri he is related to have said that it almost overlaps his work and is quite up to his standard. So he advised Mādhawdew to render it into Assamese verse while his own work was translated later into Assamese by Rāmcarāṇ. This gives a clue to the facts that *Nimi* is some early writing of Śaṅkardew, definitely much earlier than Mādhawdew's *Ratnāvalī*.

**NIMI NAVA SIDDHA SAMBAD** is another work of Śaṅkardew, complete in 427 verses, and based on the Bhāgawat Book Eleven. "Nava Siddha kathā ito Ekādaśa Skandha" (v. 49). This is related as a discourse between king Nimi and the nine accomplished Sages whose history is detailed in the work (vs. 21-30). The nine sages happened

to be present in the sacrifice performed by King Nimi. The king paid all respect to them and put nine questions to them:

Kon Bhāgawata dharma, bhakta buli kāk:  
Kon mājā, kenabā upāye tare tāk. 40.  
Kon buli Brahma, karma Yog kār nām:  
Awatari Keśave karanta kona kām.  
Kon Yuga dharma, abhaktar kon gati:  
Ehi nawa gota prasna puchilā nṛpati. 41.

'The king put these nine questions: What is the cult of Bhāgawat? Who is a *bhakta*? What is illusion? How to get rid of illusion? Who is Brahma? What is the cult of rituals? What is the mission of Kṛṣṇa's life? What is the religion of the day? What way can *abhaktas* get salvation?'

The nine sages gladly replied to the nine questions one by one, and that so elaborately.

Kṛṣṇa pada sewātese hare save dukh:  
Tāhāke bolay Rājā atyantik sukh. 45.  
Param bhakate yāk nite kare rati:  
Sehi Bhāgawatī dharma janibā nṛpati. 47.  
Āna dharme mantre tantre vahu chidra hay:  
Bhāgawat dharme nāhi sisava saṁśay. 48.  
Ito Hari-Nām dharma mahā guhyatam:  
Ihāt biswās yār sehi narottam.  
Bhaje Mādhawar nām smari sarvakṣaṇ:  
Eka bāre sije tār tini prayajan. 72.  
Prathame opaje prem-lakṣaṇ bhakati:  
Gṛha śarīrato pāche mile birakati.  
Premar āspad Kṛṣṇa mūrti furti hay:  
Ekakāle mile āhi sampad tritay. 73.  
Opaje param prem ekānta bhajane:  
Mile mahā tuṣṭi yena pratur bhojane. 75.  
Veda śīroratne kahe ihāk samprati.  
Kalō Bhāgawata dharma tomāt nṛpati. 77.

'All miseries vanish when one surrenders oneself at the feet of Kṛṣṇa. O King, this is called perfect Bliss. The religion to which great devotees are so much attached, O King, know it to be the Bhāgawata cult. In other forms of worship, as in the Tantric, there are too many pitfalls, but in the Bhāgawata cult no such dangers are to be apprehended. This religion of singing the glory of Hari is a great mystery. He who has sincere faith in it is the best of man. He who serves Kṛṣṇa and remembers Him every moment gets three objects accomplished at a time. First of all, symptoms of *bhakti* appear. Then he feels aversion for his family life and even for his own body. Finally Kṛṣṇa, the object of love, reveals Himself and thus completes the three blessings together. Great Love is generated when a person is devoted to the One God, as great joy is experienced by a sumptuous feast. I relate to you so



far at present, O king, as told by the head-gem of the Vedas (viz. the Bhāgawat).

Iswarat dekhe yito samasta prāṇik:  
 Prāṇi samastato dekhe Īśvar mūrtik.  
 Samaste aisvarjya vyāpi āche jagatat:  
 Hena yito dekhe sito mahā Bhāgawat. 80.  
 Ekānte karay prem yito Īśvarat:  
 Mātrata ācare Hari Bhakat savat.  
 Ajnak karuṇā kṣamā kare bipakṣat:  
 Sehi jan jānibā Madhyam Bhāgawat. 81.  
 Nupūje bhaktak mānya nakare prāṇik:  
 Sehi jan jānibāhān Prākṛta bhakat:  
 Eke pratimāt mātra arace Harik.  
 Ārurha haiāche tehō bhaktir pathat. 82.

'He who sees every being in God and God in every being, and sees all the attributes of God pervading the whole universe is Bhāgawat the great. He who worships God with a single-minded devotion and behaves as a friend with every devotee of Hari, and pardons and pities the ignorant even when the latter are in opposition, is Bhāgawat the mediocre. He who is not friendly with other devotees and is not respectful to living beings, but simply worships God in some form is Bhāgawat the average, who is just on the ladder of love.

Sthūla deh bhagna haile yata Jīvarāśi:  
 Punarapi līn howe Prakṛitit āsi. 117.  
 Yito Brahmā Mādhawar bhakatibihīn:  
 Tehō howe āsi punu Prakṛitit līn.  
 Brahmāro mukuti nāi nabhaile bhakati:  
 Sāmānyar kibā kathā kahibō nṛpati. 118.  
 Yena kṣāṭha dahile agani narahay:  
 Sehi mate howe save Prakṛitit lay. 119.  
 Brahmā ādi kari kīṭ patanga parjyanta:  
 Māyāye savāro kāran sṛṣṭi sthiti anta. 124.  
 Yatek jagat dekhā māyār nirmān:  
 Cināilō māyāk Rājā dekhā vidyamān. 125.

'When the physical body breaks down, every living being is again merged in nature. Even the Creator himself, if he is not devoted to Kṛṣṇa, loses himself in nature. Even Brahmā himself has no deliverance if he is not attached to *bhakti*; so, O King, imagine what can be the lot of other people who are not devoted to Hari. As fire cannot stay when the wood is burnt out, so all merge in nature, beginning from Brahmā down to worms and insects. Illusion (a form of Nature) is the cause of their creation, maintenance and destruction. All the world you see is the product of illusion. So I have introduced, O king, illusion to you'.

Māyār taran Nimi śuniō samprati:  
 Opajāibe prathame savāto birakati. 131.  
 Duhkha dūra yāibe sukha haibe buli mane:  
 Karmak ārādhe kon mahā murhajane.  
 Karmak ārādhe kon mahā murhajane.  
 Dukhase milāwe sukh nāhike kincit;

Dekhiba karmar fal hena biparīt. 132.  
 Yadi bolā dhan hante dharma opajay:  
 Sehi dhan hante svarga sukhak pāway.  
 Śunio svargat āche yata yata sukh:  
 Samaste bināsī sadā pāwe mātra duhkh. 134.  
 Antakar sankāye Brahmāro sukh nāi:  
 Sāmānyar kon lekhā śuna Nimi rāi. 136.

'Hear me then, O Nimi, how you can get rid of delusion. First, have aversion to every thing of the world. They are big fools who make rituals to remove miseries and to secure happiness, and they simply find miseries again. This is the self-contradictory result of rituals. You may say that wealth is the source of religion (ceremonies), wealth may procure heavenly happiness; but hear me, all the pleasures that heaven may afford are fleeting and lead always to miseries. Even Brahmā himself is restless over the destruction that awaits all; what then, O king Nimi, is the fate of the average people?

Bhunjibo viśiṣṭa bhog labhiā svargak:  
 Henay kāmānā kari arce Īśvarak.  
 Bārhe prīti Vedar śunīā fal śruti:  
 Pāche sehi karme tār sadhibe mukuti. 212.  
 Yena pitṛ śīśuk lāru lobhak diway:  
 Tāk pāibō buli śīśu auśadh piyay. 213.  
 Pāche Vede bole erā isava kāmānā;  
 Niskāme karibā ek Kṛṣṇat arpanā.  
 Sehi karma karai bishayat birakati:  
 Upajāibe Mādhawat param bhakati. 214.

'A person may worship God with the desire to obtain special enjoyment by securing heaven; for he may entertain a love for such worship by hearing such things from the Vedas. This may by and by lead him to salvation. It is like a child taking his medicine only by being tempted by his father with a ball of sweets. Then the Vedas would ask him to dedicate himself to Kṛṣṇa with selfless devotion by giving up all desires. Such acts will generate aversion to worldly affairs; then Great Love to Kṛṣṇa will be aroused.'

**THE EXQUISITE TOTAY:** The Sanskrit hymn which Śaṅkardew composed and sang ex-tempore on the occasion of his first meeting the king Nara Nārāyaṇ was what impressed him most.

Rājār āgat "Madhu dānava dāran;  
 Deva Varam" ito stōtra kailā nirupam. 778.  
 Śunīā bismay bhailā Nara Nārāyaṇ:  
 Śaṅkardewak cāi bulileka mane.  
 Mānuser sakati nuhike Śaṅkarar:  
 Īśvarar sakati ito jānā sārāsār. 779.

'When (Śaṅkar) composed and sang the Sanskrit hymn (to God)—"Madhu dānava dārana deva varam", Nara Nārāyaṇ simply wondered. He said to himself, 'Know it for certain, it is a divine power that works. It is not the capacity of a human being that Śaṅkardew displays.' The exquisite hymn, known as Totay, is pregnant with allusions to all the events of the life of Kṛṣṇa, in a nutshell.

Madhu-dānava-dāraṇa-devavaram:  
 Varavārija-locana cakra-dhram. 1.  
 Dharāṇi-dhara-dhārana dhyeya param:  
 Paramārtha vidyāśubha nāśakaram. 2.  
 Kara-cūrṇita cedipa bhuri bhagam:  
 Bhaga-bhuṣaṇa-karcita-pādayugam. 3  
 Yuganāyaka-nāgara-veśarucim:  
 Ruciramśupidhāna śāriara śucim. 4.  
 Śuci-cāmara-vāyu-nisevya tanum:  
 Tanumadhyaga-deha-suveśa-hanum. 5.  
 Hanumanta-Harīśa-sahāya-ratam:  
 Rataranga-parāyaṇa śatrunatam. 6.  
 Nata bartula sthūla sudīrgha vūjam:  
 Bhuja gādhipa alpa śayānamajam. 7.  
 Ajarāmar vighraha-viśwa-gurum:  
 Guru godhana kāmada kalpatarum. 8.  
 Taruṇi-mana-mohana-sarva-śubham:  
 Śubha-mangala-dāyaka-nīlanibham. 9.  
 Ibha Kumbhaja mauktika mālyavaham:  
 Bahalora samistapa sarvasaham. 10.  
 Sahajāyate padmalakṣa-cidam:  
 Cidānanda-vinodana-vedavidam. 11.  
 Viduśhānamana-mandapa kambuḡalam:  
 Galaśobhita kaustubha Bhīma-valam. 12.  
 Balabhadra-sahodar-satya-bapum:  
 Bapunidrita viśwa-surāri-ripum. 13.  
 Ripu yuthapa-yuthapa-darpaharam:  
 Haramaulinighrishta padābjaparam. 14.  
 Paraloka-sahāya-sahasra-mukham:  
 Mukharāji kulakula mālyasukham. 15.  
 Sukha-mokṣada-dakṣa Rāmā-ramanam:  
 Manaso-parimeya-sahasra fanam. 16.  
 Falatosmina tosmi tosmi-Harim:  
 Hari bairi hutāsana bhogyā-Harim. 17.  
 Hari kinkara Śaṅkara Īśapade:  
 Padamichan gāyati cāmritade. 18.

**GUNAMALA IN KUSUM MALA:** It is related that king Nara Nārāyaṇ once desired some poets of his court to give him a gist for the Twelve Books of the Bhāḡawat in Assamese verse so briefly that a person could finish reciting it 'while cooking his food'. All of them said that it was impossible. Śaṅkardew, when he heard of the king's wishes, completed the work with 376 verses in all, and presented a copy of it to Nara Nārāyaṇ who was much pleased with it. It is *Guṇa Mālā* written in the excellent *Kusum Mālā* metre, that begins:

Namo Nārāyaṇa:  
 Bhakata tāraṇa:  
 Tumi Niranjāṇa:  
 Dānava ganjana. 1.

Samsāra kāraṇa.  
 Tomara charaṇa.  
 Pataka bhanjana:  
 Gopikā ranjanan. 2.

The work concludes the same way with such lines as:

Jāniā samprati  
Agatir gati  
Mādhawar nām  
Eri āna kām

kari thira mati:  
Bhaji vadupati. 375.  
Dhari anupām:  
Bola Rām Rām. 376.

That this work was immensely popular is proved by its early imitations, especially in a work named *Guru-Guṇ-Mālā* by Puruṣottam, son of Nārāyaṇ Thākura, depicting the very life of Śaṅkardew himself as latter did the life of Kṛṣṇa; and in the same metre. This latter work is complete in 416 verses, and begins with salutation of Śaṅkardew as the latter did to Kṛṣṇa. The disciples of Śaṅkardew in different places of India are described in *Guru-Guṇmālā* as follows:

Rādhādās santa:	Guru mānilanta:
Śaraṇ lailanta:	Hari bhajilanta. 91.
Trijatā sanyāsī:	Tehō vrajabasi:
Guruk upāsī:	Bhajilanta āsi. 92.
Gopīnāth santa:	Karmī āchilanta:
Śaraṇ lailanta:	Hari bhajilanta. 93.
Setur khandata:	Bisvanāth santa:
Guru mānilanta:	Śaraṇ lailanta. 94.
Rāmbhadra santa:	Param mahanta:
Karma erilanta:	Hari bhajilanta. 95.
Kṛṣṇakānta santa:	Param mahanta:
Guru mānilanta:	Hari bhajilanta. 96.
Gangādhara santa:	Param mahanta:
Guru mānilanta:	Hari bhajilanta. 97.
Rudrapada nām:	Teji ān kām:
Guruk prapām:	Bhajilanta Rām. 98.
Śrīdhara āchanta:	Param mahanta:
Śaraṇ lailanta:	Hari bhajilanta. 99.
Rāmbhatta santa:	Guru mānilanta:
Śaraṇ lailanta:	Hari bhajilanta. 100.
Vishnudatta nām:	Ati anupām:
Kailā Paśūrah:	Guruk prapām. 101.
Viṣṇupurī santa:	Param mahanta:
Brahmananda santa:	Śaraṇ lailanta. 102.
Rūp Sanatane:	Gurur carāṇe.
Param yatane:	Paśil śaraṇe. 103.
Āno yata santa:	Śaraṇ lailanta:
Tāk kahi anta:	Kone karivanta. 104.
Rām Rām santa:	Śaraṇ lailanta:
Bhāskar mahanta:	Guru bhajilanta. 170.
Kandali Ananta:	Śaraṇ lailanta:
Gajapati santa:	Guru mānilanta. 171.
Dāmodar santa:	Śaraṇ lailanta:
Guru mānilanta:	Hari bhajilanta. 172.
Āno aparjyanta:	Vipra mahasanta:
Śaraṇ lailanta:	Hari bhajilanta. 173.
Hena kahilanta:	Nārāyaṇa santa:

Guru mānilanta:	Śaraṇ lailanta. 196.
Kāḷiram santa:	Śaraṇ lailanta:
Śrīrām mahanta:	Guru bhajilanta. 197.
Mādhaw Mahanta:	Śaraṇ lailanta:
Boloram santa:	Guru mānilanta. 198.

A clear reference to Śaṅkardew's *Guṇa-Mālā*:

Rājā bulilanta:	Bāhraya Skandhaka:
Kari vākya ek:	Diyoka pratyek. 251.
Śaṅkar āsilā:	Bahra Skanda cālā.
Kṛṣṇa Guṇa-Mālā:	Nivandha karilā. 252.

B. THE KĪRTTAN-GHOṢA: Śaṅkardew entered his fortieth year in his first pilgrimage in between his visits of Barāha Kṣetra and Prayāga. It must have occurred about 1492 that he was made over his dukedom which he managed through his son-in-law, Hari Bhūyā, and was also engaged teaching and preaching his new faith sitting in his prayer-house built by his cousin Rāmraī. These events were soon followed by recitation of the Bhāgawat to him by Jagadis Misra of Trihut; but before this was done, Śaṅkardew clearly told the Brāhmaṇ that he had already composed verses and songs on the Bhāgawat and would like to see whether the purports were in full agreement or not. While thus talking, the Bhaktas came and sang the verses and songs of Śaṅkardew in his prayer-house to the great wonder and admiration of Jagadīs; and it is on the next day that he executed his mission. Rāmcarāṇ clearly says that it was Kīrttan-Ghoṣā sung as by Ojhā-Pāli (v. 2179). This took place sometime after the historic union between Śaṅkardew and Mādhawdew, at Dhuyānhāt where they stayed for fourteen years definitely. So the composition of the *Kīrttan-Ghoṣā* was commenced some time in the last decade of the fifteenth century, in parts. The fact of early composition of the *Kīrttan* is also supported by Daityāri when he says—"Prathamate karilanta Kīrttanara chanda" (v. 96), and also by his verses (98-99). This appears to refer to the historical fact of invasion of the Kacari kingdom by the Ahoms in November, 1526, by Suhunmung or the Dihingīā Rajā (1497-1539). But any way, the *Kīrttan Ghoṣā* may not have been completed till very late in Śaṅkardew's life at Patbausi. It is corroborated by the fact of its parts being found in lower Assam by Rāmcarāṇ and confirmed by the compact style of the work all through. But it seems certain that all the poems of the *Kīrttan-Ghoṣā* were not collected together till after the death of Śaṅkardew (1568), and till sometime before the death of Mādhawdew (1596) at Kocbehār where the complete collection was handed over to him by Rāmcarāṇ, the latter's nephew. A detailed account of it is given by Daityāri (vs. 1656-74). It appears that the different poems of the *Kīrttan-Ghoṣā* were thus scattered, for people took them away to make

copies. But they must have been well-devised earlier, for when Mādhawdew got it from Rāmcaraṇ and examined whether it was in 'proper order' he found it quite all right (vs. 1576-77). Mādhawdew then divided and employed four persons to copy which they did in about eight days (v. 1577). Mādhawdew himself of course made an earlier attempt to collect the several poems of the *Kīrttan-Ghoṣā*, but then he was busy in other things and the different poems were widely distributed, and because he came to Kocbehār, he could not accomplish it (v. 1575-76). This also gives a clue to the extreme popularity of the poems even at that time.

**CATURVIMSATI AWATAR:** The *Kīrttan-Ghoṣā* consists now of nearly thirty little books. They are all written in a large of variety metres and rich in all virtues of true poems. The *Kīrttan-Ghoṣā* and the *Daśam Bhāgawat* by Śaṅkardew and their companions Nām-Ghoṣā and *Ratnāwali* by Mādhawdew are the four great works anyone of which is placed on the altar (*Thāpanā*) instead of an image and is worshipped by the Vaiṣṇavas of Assam. The *Kīrttan-Ghoṣā* in particular occupies a place in no way inferior to the place occupied by the *Gīta* in all-India Vaiṣṇavism. As a literary master-piece too, the *Kīrttan-Ghoṣā* is no less worthy than the *Gīta* for the Assamese mass people. It commands a poetic excellence and sublimity that may be equalled by few in any great literature of modern times. Though in a modern Indian language the *Kīrttan-Ghoṣā* hardly lacks the majesty and serenity of Sanskrit. Śaṅkardew combines transparence with terseness of language so much so that his translations run parallel to the original Sanskrit verses.

"Na Gangā na Gayā Setum na kāśi na ca Puṣkaram:  
Jihbāgre vartate yasya Harirityakṣaram dvayam."  
"Hari hena ito, duguti akṣar, jihbā agre thāke yār:  
Gangā Gayā Kāśi Puṣkar setuk jāibaka nalāge tār".  
"Yāhār mukhat thāke Hari hena nām:  
Gangā Gayā Kāśi Puṣkarato nāhi kām."

The First Book of the *Kīrttan-Ghoṣā* is *Caturvīṃsati Avatar Varṇan*. (Description of the Twenty Four Incarnations) beginning with the verse:

"Prathame praṇamo Brahmarūpī Sanātana:  
Sarva avatārara kāraṇa Nārāyaṇa. 1.

'First I salute Brahma (the Ego) who is Nārāyaṇ and the source of all incarnations.' This very first half-verse of the *Kīrttan Ghoṣā* brings home to the reader in clear terms the philosophy and the monistic theory of Śaṅkardew. The language has at once the serenity and majesty of classics and does not compare ill with such lines of *Jaya-deva*—"Pralay-payodhijale dhritavānasi Vedam." If brevity and com-

pact expressions are of any high merit in descriptions, the twenty four incarnations clearly described in such as the following and other few lines of the first four poems (vs. 1-33) must be considered highly admirable. The following half verses, giving the names of incarnations in the first two poems, are quoted for the rhythm and majesty which *pada* or *payār* of a modern language is capable of:

Tayu nābhi kamalat Brahmā bhaila jāta:  
 Yuge yuge avatāra dharā asaṁkhyāta. 1.  
 Matsya rūpe avatāra bhailā prathamata:  
 Uddhārila cāri Veda pralaya jalat. 2.  
 Kurma avatāra bhailā kṣirodadhi tīre:  
 Lakṣa praharara path jurilā śarīre. 3.  
 Dibya jajña Barāha swarūpa bhailā tumi:  
 Lilāye dantar agre uddhārila bhūmi. 4.  
 Ādi daitya Hiraṇyakasipu baliāra:  
 Narasiṁha rūpe hiā bidārila tāra. 5.  
 Bāmana swarūpe aditir vākya pālī:  
 Indraka thāpilā chale Balik nikāli. 6.  
 Bhailāhā Paraśurama nāme avatāra:  
 Pradakṣiṇa kari bhūmi tini sāta bāra. 7.  
 Śrīrāmarūpe Kauśalyāta avatari:  
 Vanabāsa khapilā piṭṭr vākya dhari. 8.  
 Rohinīta bhailā Halirāma avatāre:  
 Dvibidara prāṇa lailā muṣṭhira prahāre. 12.  
 Baudha avatāre Veda patha kari channa:  
 Bāmānaya śāstre mohi āchā sarvajana. 13.  
 Kalira śeṣata haiba Kalki avatāra:  
 Kāti-chiṇḍi mleccchaka karibā bundāmāra. 14.

**NAMAPARADH:** The Second Book *Nām-aparādh* deals with the sins accompanying disrespect for Nām (prayers) in two poems (vs. 34-72). Śaṅkardew mentions that he narrates this from the Sarga Khandā of the *Padma Purāṇa*, and that the original work came to him from Benares. On such authorities he says that the vilest of the sinners may be delivered from the miseries of the world by being initiated to Hari by means of devotion through prayers. To hold the devotees (Bhaktas) in contempt, to differentiate the merits of the names and glories of Viṣṇu and Śiva; to neglect Nām and even knowing it as (purport of) the Vedas condemn it now and then; to argue against reciting the name of Hari, to trifle the glories of Nām (prayers), to contemplate doing sinful deeds in the name of Nām, to put sacrifices and pilgrimages etc., on the same position as Nām, to be indifferent to Nām while one is reciting it, to give the sacred gifts of Nām to those who are not really respectful to it, and lastly to hear the glories of Nām every day and yet entertain no love for it: these ten are the sins against Nām. One can easily recover from these sins also simply by the panacea of singing the name of Hari ever and



anon. Śaṅkardew then brings home the seven successive psychological stages by which Nām works in human mind: First, it burns away all the sins; second, it arouses great merits; third, it brings aversion to worldly pleasures; fourth, it gives birth to Love for Kṛṣṇa; fifth it generates the spirit of single-minded devotion to God; sixth, it burns to ashes all māyā (illusions), and finally it makes the devotee one with Hari (God) who is all-joy and all-life embodied.

PASANDA MARDAN: The third book, *Pāṣaṇḍa Mardan* (Subduing the vile) consists of four poems again (vs. 72-146). This was the book written as a retort to the Brāhmanas who envied the Bhaktas. Dait-yāri says (vs. 712-24) that the first retort of Śaṅkardew being too strong was modified by him at the instance of Mādhawadew.

Kariā kalita Kīrtana āti.  
Pāwe Vaikunthaka cautrisa jāti. 73.  
Satya yuge kari dhyāna samādhi.  
Tretāta samasta jajna ārādhi:  
Dwāpare puji nānā bhaktibhāwe:  
Kalit Kīrtane si gati pāwe. 74.

'By Kīrttan (recitation of God's name and glory) alone in the Iron Age, all the thirty-four castes of people can secure Vaikuntha. What could be gained by meditation in the Gold Age, by sacrifices in the Silver Age, by worship (pūjā) in the Copper Age, can now be secured in the Iron Age by Kīrttan alone. This is re-echoed in the *Nām-ghoṣā* (v. 399) by Mādhawadew.

The references to the various scriptures given even in poems supporting himself are interesting and they show how extensively Śaṅkardew studied and how intensively he dived into his subject (vs. 77-87). In the second poem Śaṅkardew asserts that even if one person condemns a man of low caste singing glory of God, he at once loses all the merits that he acquired all through his life and goes to hell (v. 89). 'If you would not believe in what I say, better consult the Suta Saṁhitā.' Again, he says that the hearing and reciting the name of God is the harvest reaped by sowing the seed of a selfless work dedicated to Viṣṇu (God):

Āmār bole apratyaya yāhā:  
Ekādaśa Skandha bicāri cāhā. 96.

'If you would disbelieve my word, you may consult the Bhāṅawat, Book Eleven'. In the third poem of this Book, Śaṅkardew pushes the point further and says:

Sito Cāndālaka gariṣṭha māni:  
Yāra jihbāgre thāke Hari bāṇi. 112.  
Sehise kulīna Vedaka buje:

Yāhār mukhe Hari Nāma sije.  
 Parama tattwa jāni Dewahuti:  
 Tritiya Skandhata karilā stuti. 113.  
 Nalāge lina mukutiko tathā:  
 Nāhi Hari-pada pankaja yathā. 114.

'That outcaste is certainly superior who has the name of Hari in his lips... He alone is of high caste and understands the Vedas too who sings the name of God freely. Knowing this great truth Dewahuti, in the Book Three of the Bhāgawat, prayed that he would not prefer the salvation to be merged in God where there is no adoring of the lotus-feet of Hari.'

Nalāge Dewa Dwija Rīsi huiba:  
 Nalāge samasta śāstra jāniba:  
 Michāte mare āna karma kari:  
 Howanta Bhakatit tuṣṭa Hari. 121.  
 Saptam Skandhata Prahlāda bāṇi.  
 Dekhio vicāra kariā āni. 123.

'Need ye not be a God or a Brahman or a Sage. Need ye not know all the scriptures. Needless it is to be mortified with the burdens of rituals. God is well pleased with Love (Bhakti)... Find this as the message of Prahlad in the Book Seven of the Bhāgawat.'

In the fourth poem, Śaṅkardew says that *tantras*, *mantras* and other things have the defects that the slightest departure may corrupt them, but Nām can well accomplish any noble object.

Śarīra śavaka mai bole citte:  
 Mamata kare putra bhārjyā bitte. 132.  
 Tīrtha buli kare jalata śuddhi:  
 Pratimāta kare dewatā buddhi.  
 Vaiṣṇawata nāi isava mati:  
 Garuto adhama Kṛṣṇa Vadati. 133.

'Kṛṣṇa says he who mistakes the corpse of a body for the Self; pins his faith in his son, wife, and money; wants to purify himself with water calling it pilgrimage; mistakes an idol for a god; must be more silly than a bullock. A Vaiṣṇava (true devotee of God) cannot have such foolish ideas.'

**DHYANAVARNAN:** The Fourth book is *Dhyānavarnan* (Description of Meditation). It consists of two beautiful poems (vs. 147-174) full of classical splendour and able to match any such description in Sanskrit in the majesty of its verses. The first poem describes paradise and the seat there-in of Nārāyaṇa. Then he describes the Seat of God in Paradise which may easily match with the sublimity of description in any language. In the second poem Śaṅkardew describes the person of Nārāyaṇa (Viṣṇu) from the feet upto the head, the outlines of which are so impressive that they may be better compared to a master-piece of Greek sculpture than to a Raphael's painting.

**AJAMIL UPAKHYAN:** The first book (vs. 175-216) is *Ajāmīl Upākhyān* the story of Ajāmīl, a Brāhmaṇ who became fallen in a public woman and not only gave up his caste functions but also became addicted to the blackest sins possible and approached death. He had as many as ten sons by the woman, the youngest of whom was named Nārāyaṇ out of mere affection. At the last moment by dreading death he unwittingly called his youngest son by name, and immediately to his pleasant surprise four messengers of Viṣṇu came for his rescue, for it was a name of Kṛṣṇa (God). So the first poem (vs. 175-84) of this chapter moralises by saying that the blackest of sins are immediately washed away when the name of God is pronounced even unwittingly. The other three poems also hang other advice on the efficacy of Nām on to the peg of this story. The second poem (vs. 185-94) commences with a discussion on the superiority of Nām-dharma as an atonement which lies in the fact that while after subjecting oneself to other forms of atonement one may fall back on it,

Cittara śodhana                      Harira kirttana  
Pāpara ālu ubhanje. 185.

‘singing the name and fame of God (as an atonement) purifies the heart and uproots the very evil’.

Śaṅkardew gives many a simile to prove the efficacy of Nām to the hilt. He says that as the fire, whether intended or not, burns away all combustible materials before it, so the name of God, pronounced wittingly or unwittingly, burns away all sins. Again, as a great medicine taken even without knowing its virtues, removes all diseases, so one who utters the name of God even in spite of himself shall of course be delivered from all miseries (v. 187). Elsewhere he says:

Biṣa buli amritaka pile yito nara:  
Nuhibeka jāno sito ajara amara.

‘Is not a person sure to overcome old age and death when he takes ambrosia (amrit) by mistaking it for poison?’ Thus in the third poem he repeats that prescribing any atonement other than Nām by the sages themselves, is like prescribing any medicine even when there is the king of medicines that can revive one to life. So also in the fourth poem he extols the glory of Nām and its suitability to the modern age, saying,

Kali yuge āra                      anyatra dharmata  
Kāro nāhi adhikār. 207.

‘No one has any right to any other religion (save prayer).’ Also, in the Solar Eclipse, it is prescribed to give one crore of cows to Brahmans, to stay in the water of the Ganges about Prayāga for long, and one may

make a million of sacrifices and make gifts of gold; but all these heaped together cannot equal one hundredth part of merit that Nām (prayer) alone can acquire. Nay, he says much more than this: 'Nām can destroy the sins to such an extent that it is beyond the sinners to commit so many sins'. Elsewhere:

Hari Nāme yata pāpa saṁhariba pāre:  
Pātaki tateka pāpa karite nowāre.

**PRĀHLĀD CARIT:** The sixth book is *Prahlād Carit*, life of Prahlād, the great Saint. It is of considerable dimensions and contains as many as twenty two poems. The first poem begins with the four accomplished persons (Siddhas), all born of Brahmā's mind, coming to Vaikuṇṭha and all naked. Śaṅkardew gives a preliminary idea of Vaikuṇṭha in a few lines of this poem of Jhunā metre.

Ati ānandita Viṣṇura sthāne;  
. Save caturbhuja puruṣa māne. 219.  
Yateka ramaṇi Lakṣmi pratyeka:  
Kalpa-tāru sama brikṣa yateka. 220.  
Gāwanta Kṛṣṇara guṇa-carita:  
Ānandate drawe savāre citta. 22.

'In this joyous place of Viṣṇu, all men are four-handed (like Himself). All women are like the goddess of wealth herself. All trees are equal to the great wish-yielding tree. While they sing the life and glories of Kṛṣṇa, the hearts of all dissolve in joy'.

In the second poem too Śaṅkardew gives an excellent picture of Paradise with a few more brushes of his pen in the beautiful biref-jhunā or brief-Ekāwali metre.

Vaikuṇṭha Nagari nirupama:  
Nāhi yāta kālara vikrama. 230.  
Mūrtti dhari veda-śāstragaṇa:  
Kāre berhi mahimā kīrtana. 232.

'The city of Vaikuṇṭha has no comparison. Time has no influence over it. . . . The Vedas and other scriptures embody themselves in human forms and sing the glory of God.' The four sages then came to the seventh gate of heaven which was kept by two persons also bearing resemblance with Kṛṣṇa's appearance. The sages came in without asking the gate-keepers at which the latter enraged, pulled the sages back. The third poem opens with the curse of the sages described in the Jhunā metre now applied to express *Vira raṣa*.

Vaiṣṇava bolā torā duyojana:  
Vaikunthabāsira nohe lakṣaṇa. 24.  
Pārisada bolāi karasa cati:  
Nohikā Vaiṣṇava duyo kapaṭi:  
Vaikuntharo ānā duryaśa vara:  
Aira parā torā duhānto para. 242.

'You say you are two Vaiṣṇavas. But you do not possess the virtues of the citizens of heaven. You pride yourselves as the attendants of Kṛṣṇa, but you are not Vaiṣṇavas; both of you are hypocrites. You are bringing bad disgrace for Vaiṣṇava itself. So get you down from hence.' The gate-keepers who were no other than Jaya and Vijaya, being thus cursed to be born of demons on the earth, fell on their knees and prayed not for pardon, but for blessings of loyalty to God.

Āpona karme yāo adhogati:  
Prabhura pāwe nachāroka mati. 244.  
Tomāsātā māgo etaka bara:

'We go down by our own misdeeds. But we pray that you will bless us to be faithful to the feet of God.'

In the fourth poem the four sages offer their prayers to Kṛṣṇa who in the fifth poem himself apologises them saying:

Sewake yadi kare apakāra:  
Pāwe apayaśa swāmika tāra. 266.

'If a servant does a mischief, the discredit goes to its Master.' And in the sixth poem, the sages pray once more in beautiful quick verses of Jhumuri or Gajagati metre.

Tomāra vacana Swāmi:	Nubujilo eko āmi.
Āpuni Īswara huyā:	Bolāhā kariyo dayā. 275.
Mānya kari Brāhmanaka:	Sikṣā dilā sāmānyaka. 278.
Dharma patha rakṣā kari:	Sriṣṭi pravarttowā Hari. 279.

'O Lord, we fail to appreciate what you say....By showing respect to Brāhmins, you simply teach the ignorant, and by keeping the religious ways in tact, you are maintaining the creation, O God.' So on and so forth. In the ninth poem Śaṅkardew describes how Brahmā satisfied with Hiraṇya's meditation, granted the interesting boon asked for:

Kāto hante nuhibeka mohora maraṇa. 310  
Namaribo rātrita dinata mrityu nauka:  
Astre-sastre māribāka nowāroka moka:  
Miloka mahimā mora tomāra samāna:  
Diyo ehi vara Brahmā namāgoho āna. 311.

'My death will not take place in the hands of any being (created by Brahmā). People of the three worlds shall seek shelter under my arms. I must not die by day nor at night. No weapon whatsoever shall kill me. Let my greatness equal yours. Grant me this much of a boon, O Brahmā, if you would. I seek no more.'

In the tenth poem Śaṅkardew describes Prahalād as a great Bhakta indirectly reminding the reader what a devotee should be.

Prahalāda Vaiṣṇava bhaila āti:  
Viṣṇuka cintanta dine rāti.  
Indriyaka kariā niyamā:

Prāṇika dekhanta ātmā sama. 321.

Rūpe-guṇe vidyāta pārgata:

Nāhi garba tathāpi manata.

Dukhato udbeg nohe citta.

Nāhi sprihā sukhato kincita. 322.

Panca bariṣate mahāmati:

Krīrhā eri karanta bhakati.

Nitānte Harika kare dhyāna:

Hari bine nedekhanta āna. 324.

'Prahlaḍ became a great Vaiṣṇava. He used to think of Viṣṇu day and night. He controlled his senses and considered all living beings to be like himself. In form, virtues and learning, he headed all others, and had yet no pride. He could not be moved by woe nor had he any desire for weal. He had a master mind even in his fifth year, and would be devoted to divine love giving up play. He would whole-heartedly meditate Hari and would see nothing but Hari.'

In the eleventh poem is described how his teachers asked Prahlaḍ who taught him that anti-demon doctrine and who led him astray and how Prahlaḍ replied:

Cumbakara kāche lohā bhrame yena thāne:

Bhinna bhaila buddhi mora Viṣṇu sannidhāne.

'As the iron is attracted by the magnet towards itself, so my intellect is changed (from anti-Vaiṣṇavite doctrine) by the presence of Viṣṇu Himself.'

Kolāta baisāi ghane ghane ghrāṇi śira:

Hāsi Prahlaḍata kathā sodhe mahabira. 339.

Kibā suśobhana pātha parhi āchā tāta:

Guruta śikhilā kibā kahio āmāta. 340.

'The great hero (Hiraṇya) seated Prahlaḍ in his lap and out of extreme affection, frequently smelt his son's head and asked with a gentle smile: 'Do tell me what nice lessons you have learnt from your teacher' So the twelfth poem opens up with Prahlaḍ's reply:

Śravaṇa Kīrtana                      smaraṇa Viṣṇura

Arccana pada-sewana:

Dāśya sakhitya                      vandana Viṣṇuta

Kariba deha arpaṇa.

Nava vidha bhakti                      Viṣṇuta ācare,

Sehise pātha uttama. 341.

'That lesson is best which teaches the nine forms of Love to be applied to Viṣṇu, namely Hearing, Singing, Thinking, Worshipping, Prostrating at His feet, Slavery, Friendship, Invocation and Surrender of the body to Viṣṇu.'

Hiraṇya ordered his son to be immediately killed. All measures were resorted to, but failed. The thirteenth poem opens with Hiraṇya's

only hope in 'wait and see.' Prahalād mean-while advised other children.

Hena jāni Asura swabhāwa save eri:  
Samasta prāṇika pūjā Viṣṇu buddhi kari. 360.  
Tevese alpate tuṣṭa haiba Nārāyaṇe:  
Konano durlabha āche Hari suprasanne. 36.

'So give up the nature of demons. Regard every being as God Himself. Then God will be easily pleased. And what remains there that cannot be attained when God is pleased?' The fifteenth poem opens with the continuation of Prahlād's preaching of the Vaiṣṇava faith:

Kṛṣṇa caraṇe haibe yimate bhakati:  
Śunā sāwadhāne tāka sthira kari mati:  
Viṣṇu Bhakatara sanga laibā prathamate:  
Guru māni śuśrūṣā karibā bhālamate. 376.  
Laiā upadeśa Mādhawaka ārādhiba:  
Yateka sukṛti māne Kṛṣṇate arpibā.  
Kṛṣṇa kathā śṛavanata śuddha howe mana:  
Saravadāi karibeka Kṛṣṇara Kīrtana. 377.  
Kṛṣṇa caraṇa cintibeka hridayata:  
Āchanta Īśwara Hari samasta bhūtata.  
Hena jāni prāpādhika karibā satkara:  
Tevese Kṛṣṇata rati haibeka tomāra. 378.  
Harira sewāta kichu nāhike prayasa:  
Āpuni laibanta Hari hridayāta bāsa. 379.

'Hear me with wrapt attention how a person can be truly devoted to Kṛṣṇa. First of all, he must find the company of a devotee of Viṣṇu. He must serve him with all propriety as a preceptor. He must meditate Mādhawa in obedience to the advice of his Preceptor. All good deeds he performs must be dedicated to Kṛṣṇa. His mind must be purified by hearing the glories of Kṛṣṇa which he must always sing himself too. He must think of the feet of God in his heart. God is present in every element and hence he should love and regard them all better than himself. Then alone he will have the love of God in his heart. Then he will not have to worry so much about serving God who will come of Himself and reside in His devotee's heart.' And he repeats once and again :

Samasta bhūtate dekhibeka Nārāyaṇa:  
Āta pare āna dharma save birhambana. 383.

'Find God in every element. All religions else than this are useless.'

The sixteenth poem opens with Hiraṇya's anger, in the excellent quick metre of Jhunā producing the effect of heroic sentiment (*Vīra rasa*):

Hiraṇyakaśipu śuniā hena:  
Krodhata kampe Yama yena.  
Jhankāre mātāhā kari ati darpa.  
Lāthi pāi yena fokāre sarpa. 388.  
Asura garje katākṣe cāi.  
Khāibo āji tora muṇḍa putāi. 390.



'On hearing the report, Hiranyakasipu shievered in fury like death himself. He moved his head to and fro as does a snake when beaten with a stick. The demon roared by casting a glance at his son—'Son, I will eat up your head today'. Prahlād, not the least moved, said yet humbly:

Śatru mitra sava kario sama:  
Ehise Kṛṣṇara Bhakti uttama. 393.  
Nijini śarīra śatrucaya:  
Jānilo daśodiśa keho kaya.  
Jāniā piṭṛ erā ahankāra:  
Bhajiyoḥa Hari kahilo sāra. 394.

'The best love of God comes in that state of mind in which one can entertain the same feeling to a foe as to a friend. How can a person boast of universal conquest without conquering the enemies of his own body (lust, greed, anger attachment etc.). So, father, do give up your pride and be devoted to God, I tell you in truth.' This added fuel to the fire and Hiranya burst out:

Moka bikarthasa are barbara:  
Mota pare āra āche Īśwara: 395.  
Harise yadi jagatara Īśa:  
Kaita āche tāra kaha uddeśā. 396.

'O brute, dare you hold me to ridicule? Can there be any God other than myself?.... If Hari be the Master of the world, tell me then where he resides.' Prahalād simply said:

Savāte āchaya jagata-swāmi.  
Sfatika stambhato dekhoho āmi. 397.

'Lord of the world lives in every element. Sometimes I see him even in yonder crystal pillar.'

Śaṅkardew's descriptions, as noted, are more like the linings of a fine Greek sculpture than the brushes in a Raphaels' picture. They are always clear-cut. He has the master hand for delineating any mood or sentiment, soft as love or hard as wrath. So his description of the Man-Lion is quoted for its rhythmic effect in producing wonder (viṣmaya) by itself.

Tapta suvarṇara varṇa jvale cakṣu dui:  
Paṇyata samāna kāi āche svarga chui.  
Śarīrara loma candra same śukla varṇa:  
Tuli āche urdhaka stabadha dui karṇa. 403.  
Bāilā mukha yena giri gahbara parāi  
Pracaṇḍa bātāsa yena nisvāśa bajāi.  
Prakāśaya keśa śire rabira kirāṇa:  
Bhrukuṭi kuṭila mukha bikaṭa daśana. 404.  
Laha laha kare jihbā yena kṣura dhāra:  
Jvale bāhu śata tikṣṇa nakhe camatkāra  
Bahal hridya dirgha gribā kṛśa kaṭi:  
Jihbā meli āche dui daśana prakati. 405.

And he describes the fight and final crushing of Hiranya in the eighteenth poem of nice quick metre of brief Jhunā having onomatopoeic effects.

Jhankārante śirara keśara:  
 Urāi save bimāna svargara. 419.  
 Khalake sāgara śvāsa lāgi:  
 Begata parvata pare bhāgi.  
 Nṛsiṃhara caranara gati:  
 Talabala kare basumati. 420.

'When (Man-Lion) shievered his mane, all the chariots of heaven took to flight. When he exhaled the air, the sea roared. When he went in speed, the mountains were levelled to the ground. And when he simply walked, the Earth trembled.' Prahlād's prayer contained in the twentieth poem is unique; a few verses are quoted to show how the *dulari* or *tripadī* metre has been used to produce *śānta rasa*:

Brahmā siddha muni      ādio napāwe  
                                  Pūjibe tomāra pāwa;  
 Kibā stuti-nati              kariboho āmi  
                                  Asura krura svabhāwa. 441.  
 Sīto mahā garbi              Vipre āponāka  
                                  Pavitra kariba nāre;  
 Bhakata cāndāle              āponāko tāre  
                                  Samasta kula uddhāre. 442.  
 Tumi Jaga-Jiwa              tomāka pujile  
                                  Mile āponāta jāi:  
 Yena mukha-śrika              pratibimba mukhe  
                                  Dekhiā darpaṇa cāi. 443.  
 Bhayankara kopa              dekhiā tomāra  
                                  Prabhu bhaya mora nāi:  
 Saṃsāra cakrara              nikāra dekhiā  
                                  Sadāye dhātu urāi. 444.  
 Kimate bhakati              karo pancendriye  
                                  Pancadike lāgi dhare;  
 Yena grihasthaka              aneka sapatni  
                                  Sakale ākula kare. 446

'The sages and others, and even Brahmā himself, cannot worship thy feet properly; how can I, being a demon of crooked nature, offer Thee my prayers? The proud Brahman cannot purify himself, whereas an outcaste who is a true devotee of God, not only delivers himself but also delivers all his line of predecessors and successors.... Thou art the Life of this world, and when a person worships Thee he really worships himself, as one sees his own face by looking at the mirror.... O Lord, I am not terrified to see Thee in fierce wrath, for my life is already on fire seeing the agonies in the wheel of this world.... How can I be devoted to Thee, for the five organs of sense lead me astray in five directions, like a man running mad at persistent demands of many co-wives'.

Viṣṇu in the Man-Lion was well pleased. So the twenty first poem begins with Viṣṇu's offer to Prahlād:

Bhakatar pūrō manoratha:  
 Diō Kāma Mokṣa Dharma Artha. 449.

'I satisfy my devotee's wishes; and give him his Desire, Salvation, Religion and wealth' But Prahlād flatly refused.

Bhaktise parama lābha jāni;  
Viṣṇuka bolanta hāsi bāṇī. 450.  
Bānche fala taju kari kritya;  
Sito bāṇijyara noho bhritya. 451.  
Tomāra akāma bhritya āmi;  
Tumio niṣkāma mora svāmi. 452.  
Śuni Nara-Sinhe hāsilanta;  
Jāno tumi Bhakata ekānta. 453.

'Knowing thoroughly well that Love is the greatest reward, (Prahlaḍ) said with a smile to Viṣṇu 'I am not a slave to that bargain which seeks profit by worshipping Thee. I am Thy selfless slave, and Thou art my disinterested Master'. . . . On hearing this the Man Lion smiled: 'I know you are a self-less devotee.' But he asked Prahlād to take his father's throne and advised:

Sadāi śunibā mora kathā:  
Mora rūpa cintibā sarbathā.  
Kīrttane palāiba pāpacaya:  
Bhoga bhunji puṇya kārā kṣaya. 454.  
Tora yaśa byāpibe jagate:  
Rātri dina moka sumarante.  
Save karma-bandha haiba hīna;  
Antakāle mota jāibā lina. 455.

'Always hear My glories. Think of My form by all means. By singing My glories Thou wilt remove Thy sins. Then wilt Thou spend thy merits by enjoying (as a king). Thy name will spread far and wide. By remembering Me day and night, Thou wilt loose all the bindings that thy deeds may bring, till at last Thou wilt merge in Me.' The twenty second poem begins with the Man-Lion's reply to Prahlād apologising for his father's sins:

Nṛsiṃha bolanta hāsi śunio Prahlaḍa:  
Dibāka nalāge tok isava prasāda.  
Parama Vaiṣṇava tai putra bhāili yāra:  
Ekais puruṣa tāra karili uddhāra. 460.  
Yaita thāke Bhakta mora udāra caritra:  
Kīṭa-patangako tathā karay pavitra:  
Nakare prāṇika himsā nāhi eko sprihā:  
Amāta arpana kare āponāra dehā. 461.

'The Man-Lion said with a smile—'Hear Me, O Prahlād, need you not such a blessing. A great Vaiṣṇava as you are, you have delivered as many as twenty one generations of the line in which you are born. Where my Bhaktas of the most noble character reside, even the worms and insects of that locality are made pure. Such a Bhakta never envies any living being, and dedicates even his body to Myself.'

GAJENDROPAKHYAN: The Seventh Book is *Gajendropākhyān*, the story of the Lord of the elephants. It consists of three poems. The mythological story has been utilised to illustrate how any person addict-

ed to power and pelf can be delivered from the world only by devotion to God. The helplessness of the lord of elephants is the exact condition of any man of pride. By the grace of God, the miseries of the lord of elephant were removed forthwith.

The classicism of Śaṅkardew is evidenced also in the description of the mountain of Trikūta in the Sea of Cream. It is quoted for the rhythm and music of the verses that may also suggest the majesty of its diction by themselves.

Kṣira sāgarar māje Trikūta parvata:  
Prakāśante āche tini lokata Vekata.  
Suvarṇa rajata lohā jwale tini śringa:  
Cakṣuta jamaka lāge dekhite biriṅga. 475.  
Āno yata śringa ratne kare tirimiri:  
Daś diśa prakāśia sobhe śukla giri.  
Sahasra yojana juri jwale giribara:  
Ucchrita dekhia daśa hājara prahara. 476.  
Kṣira sāgarara dhau caubhiti uthale:  
Pakhāle parvat suśītala dugdhajale:  
Thāne thāne āche bhūmi aneka udyāna:  
Fula jakamaka gandhe nāhike samāna. 477.  
Nadi nada aśeṣa biṣeṣa sarobara:  
Sfatika nirmala jala dekhi manohara.  
Vidyādhari save tāta nāmi kare snāna:  
Pakhāli śarīra bawe sugandhita ghrāṇa. 478.  
Parama amūlya gandha uthale sadāi:  
Dasadisa prakāśia bāyu bahi jāi.  
Dekhi suśobhana bana nava upabane:  
Yāta nite krīrhe deva dibya nārīgaṇe. 479.

To crown this description, Śaṅkardew adds:

Āno yata taru-bana save kalpatāru.  
Chaya rhitu eka kale basanta udaya:  
Bhramare gunjare kuli pancama puraya. 481.  
Bahaya malayā bāyu āmodita mana.  
Nṛitya-gīta kare tāte apesaragaṇa. 482.

'All the trees and creepers there are all like the wish-yielding tree itself. All the six seasons appear together in the form of Spring, the bees humming and the cuckoos singing charmingly. The gentle breeze blows filling the mind with joy, and the heavenly damsels sing and dance there every day'. Within the mountainous region of Trikūta there is a lake which is described in the second poem in a few verses like these in the jhunā metre:

Suvarṇamaya padma āche juri:  
Bhramare tāra madhu piye pari.  
Rajahamṣa ādi yateka pakṣi:  
Pari pari thāke najāi upekṣi. 484.

'(The lake) abounds with gold lotuses, and the black bees drink their honey to their hearts' content. The wild goose and other birds that enjoy here never intend to leave the lake.'

**HARA-MOHAN:** The eighth book is *Hara-Mohan*, telling how Śiva was charmed by Viṣṇu in the form of a beautiful woman. Of the ten poems (vs. 512-609), the second commences with the grand prayer of Śiva to Mādhawa (God) which in a nut-shell reveals the philosophy of Vaiṣṇavism as preached by Śaṅkardew:

Namo namo Mādhawa Vidhira Vidhidātā:  
Tumi jagatara gati-mati pitā mātā.  
Tumi paramātmā jagatar Īsa eka:  
Eko bastu nāhike tomāta byatireka. 520.  
Tumi kārya kāraṇa samasta carācara:  
Suvarṇe kuṇḍale yena nāhike antara.  
Tumi paśu pakṣi surāsura taru-tṛṇa:  
Ajñānata mūrhaḥjane dekhe bhinna bhinna. 521.  
Tomarese māyāye mohile sarvakshane:  
Tumi ātmā tomāka najāne ekojane.  
Samasta bhūtar tumi āchā hridayata:  
Tattva napāi tomāka bicare bāhirata. 522.  
Tumise kewale satya michā save āna:  
Jāni jñānigaṇe kare hridayata dhyāna.  
Namāgoho.sukha bhoga nalāge mukuti:  
Tomāra carāṇe mātṛa thākoka bhakati. 523.  
Mukhe lauka nāma mora karṇe taju kathā:  
Hṛidayata pāda-padma thākok sarvathā.  
Sajjanara sanga nugucokā sarvakṣane:  
Eteke prasāda māgo tomāra carāṇe. 524.

'I bow to Thee, Mādhawa, the commander of the framer (Brahmā) of the commands of God. Thou art the progress, the Mind, the father and the mother of the world. Thou art the Great Soul and One God of the universe. There is nothing in this world besides Thee. Thou art the Cause. Thou art the Effect. Thou art the Universe itself, as there can be no difference between gold and an ear-ornament made of gold. Thou art all animals. Thou art all birds. Thou art all gods. Thou art demons. Thou art the trees. Thou art the creepers. It is through sheer ignorance that people find them different. It is by illusions that all are blinded. Thou art the Soul, but nobody knows Thee. Thou livest in the hearts of every being. They do not know the mystery. They search Thee outside. Thou art the only Truth. All else are false. The wise know it and so they meditate Thee in their hearts. I do not beg enjoyment of bliss of Thee. I do not need salvation. Let my Love lie for ever at Thy feet. Let my mouth sing Thy glories. Let my heart cherish Thy lotus-feet for ever and for ever. Let me not for a moment be off from the company of the noble. This is the only blessing I beg of Thee.'

Śiva expressed his desire to see the Mohiṇi Rūpa of Viṣṇu exhibited in Samudra Manthana but Viṣṇu warned:

Ghora nārī māyā sarva māyāte kutsita:  
Mahā siddha muniro katākṣe hare citta.  
Daraśane kare tapa japa yoga bhanga:  
Jāni jñānigaṇe kāmīnira ere sanga. 529.



crores of universes at a glance. I am a Śiva, master of one of such universes. What disgrace have I in being deluded by the One whose production of a certain limb is but this universe?' Śiva's apology and prayer includes the moral:

Yata dekhā carācar      Harimay nirantar  
 Harit prithak kono nahe:  
 Yijan bhakati-hīn      si dekhe Harik bhin  
 Harir māvāye tāk mohe. 600.

'All this universe is nothing but God. Only he who is devoid of divine love, thinks God as apart. Such a person is charmed by His illusions.'

BALICHALAN: The ninth book is *Balichalan*. It is complete in five poems, showing how wonderfully devoted was Bali to Viṣṇu, and this is expressed even in a few brushes of Śaṅkardew's pen;

Jagatake pavitra karanta Daityapati:  
 Hariro bismay dekhi Bālor bhakati. 620.  
 Antarikṣe mahimā bakhane siddha muni:  
 Henato Vaisnava natu dekhi natu śuni. 621.

‘The king of the demons (Bali) sanctified the whole world (by his devotion). Hari Himself wondered at his Bhakti (Love). All the great sages extolled and praised Bali, and said that such a Vaisṇava could neither be seen nor be heard of.’

SISU LILA: The tenth book is *Sīsu Līlā*. The first poem commences with the unveiling of Śaṅkardew's beautiful pen-picture of Viṣṇu in which person Kṛṣṇa incarnated himself. The music of the verses may be noted:

Kṛṣṇa rūpe Daivakita bhailā avatāra:  
 Saṅkha Cakra Gadā padma karata tomāra.  
 Pita bastre sobhe ati śyāma kalewara:  
 Kamala locana cāru aruṇa adhara. 643.  
 Sundar nāsika karṇe makara kuṇḍala:  
 Kaṇṭhata kaustabha śire kiriti ujjala.  
 Āpādalambita vanamālā jvale gale:  
 Śobhe ati śribatsa bahala bakṣasthale. 644.  
 Cāru cāri bhujā jvala ājānulambita:  
 Karikara sama uru bartula balita.  
 Carāṇa kamala yena nava padma koṣa:  
 Yāka dekhi bhakatara parama santosa. 645.

It is almost a pan-Indian classical medium of expression invented by Śaṅkardew. The superb humanism of this movement in Indian renaissance is beautifully revealed through Śaṅkardew in delineations of simple events of Kṛṣṇa's childhood. Yaśodā was ready to inflict corporal punishment on the child for the allegation of eating some earth. When she caught him by his hands, he feigned fear.

Mukhaka cāhante lāgaya bethā:  
Kiva māti khāili sodhanta kathā. 667.

'Looking at his face, (Yaśodā) felt compassionate, and asked him (gently) why then he ate some earth'. Denied the charge, he was asked to open his mouth which he did to the great surprise of Yaśodā.

Yaśodā sundarī dekhanta pāche:  
 Samasta jagata garbhate āche.  
 Sātakhāna dwipa sāto sāgara:  
 Giri vana nadī grāma nagara. 671.  
 Vāyu surjya śaśī diśa ākāśa.  
 Tārāgaṇe taita kare prakāśa.  
 Samaste jiwa jyotisteja jala:  
 Sattwa-rajā- stama indriya bala. 672  
 Mana buddhi kāla karma yateka:  
 Savāko garbhate dekhe pratyeke.  
 Yateka dhenu gopa gopī jāka:  
 Yaśodā dekhe taite āponāka. 673.

'The graceful Yaśodā then saw that the whole world is within him. The seven islands, the seven seas, and all the mountains, forests, rivers, villages and towns, the atmosphere, the Sun, the Moon, the directions, the Sky, the stars shining, all animals, the light, the fire, the water, (the three virtues) Sattwa, Rajah, Tamah, and the force of the organs of sense, the Mind, the Intellect, Time and Actions! She saw every thing vividly. She also saw the cows, the milkmen and milk-maids and above all, Yaśodā saw herself within Kṛṣṇa.'

Śaṅkardew describes the psychological situation in a few lines of the quick metre of jhunā to add to the emotion.

Kibā bhrama bhailā mohaka pāyā:  
 Dekhilo swapna kibā deva māyā. 674.  
 Kibā jāne māyā mora tanaya:  
 Kariba nowāro eko niścaya.  
 Nuhikanta mora putra mānusa:  
 Ehentense Viṣṇu Ādi Puruṣa. 675.

'What illusion do I undergo through some charm? Is it a dream or some god deludes me? Does my son know any charm? I am at a fix. Surely my son is no human being. He must be the Origin of Man.'

Karilā Vaiṣṇavī māyā bistāra:  
 Gucila Viṣṇu jñāna Yaśodāra. 679.  
 Kṛṣṇata putra buddhi bhailā jāta:  
 Dhūlā jāri tuli lailā kolāta.  
 Pāranta cumā mukhe stana diā:  
 Mora āyu lai putai jiā. 680.

'(Kṛṣṇa) applied his magic Vaiṣṇavite power. Yaśodā could now no more think of Kṛṣṇa as Viṣṇu. She began once more to feel that Kṛṣṇa is her son. She removed the dust off his body and took him up in her lap. She kissed his face and gave him her breast to suck. She blessed him, 'O my son, may you live longer heaping my duration of life on your own.' Śaṅkardew uses such mythological stories to show that the Cult of Love is a happy short cut to attain God.



Again Śaṅkardew takes another superb snap of Yaśodā at her work and one sees in it an Assamese housewife in her toil:

Dineka Yaśodā Nanda-jāyā:  
 Āpuni mathanta dadhi gaiā.  
 Kṛṣṇara śaiśawa līlāka smari:  
 Kṛṣṇa gīta gāwanta sundarī. 684.  
 Kṣauma vastra pindhi dibya kāche:  
 Katita mekhalā bāndhi āche.  
 Putra snehe srawe duyo stana:  
 Ājorante lare ghane ghana. 685.  
 Runajhuna karara kankana:  
 Śrama jale ujjwala badana.  
 Kārṇata kuṇḍala dole ati:  
 Khasi pare khopāra mālatī. 686.

'It so happened on a day that Yaśodā, the consort of Nanda, was churning the milk herself. While at work this graceful woman was singing songs all about the early sports of Kṛṣṇa, all the time thinking of Kṛṣṇa alone. She was quite agreeably dressed in silk, her lower garment hanging from her waist. In affection for her son, the milk of her breasts overflowed itself. The breasts moved gently, off and on, as she worked. The bracelets of her hands made a sweet jingling sound. Her face shone with drops of perspiration in it. Her ear-rings moved to and fro, and the mālatī flower dropped off the bunch of her hair.' At this stage Kṛṣṇa came and stopped his mother's work by force:

Hāsi kole laiā Nanda-jāyā:  
 Dilā stana putra mukha cāyā. 688.

'The consort of Nanda smiled and took Kṛṣṇa in her lap, and gave him to suck her breasts looking all the while at her son's face.' In the meantime their milk in the pot was about to overflow boiling, and she left her son for it.

Stana piba napāyā Kṛṣṇara:  
 Kope kāmpe aruṇa adhāra.  
 Daśana kāmuri ati cānda:  
 Silāye bhāṅgilā dadhi bhānda. 689.

'Failing to continue sucking his mother's breasts, Kṛṣṇa's lips reddish as the rising sun shivered in wrath, and he bit his lips, threw stones at milk-pots and broke them.' She turned up, saw all these and took a stick in hand.

Pāche pāche Yaśodā khedanta:  
 Bhaye lāga māwaka nedanta. 693.  
 Yāka Yogi napāwe dhyānata:  
 Hena Hari palānta bhayata.  
 Putraka khedanta mahā satī:  
 Sronibhare ākramilā gati. 694.  
 Begata melana bhaila khopā.  
 Khasi pare mālatīra thopā. 695.

'Yasodā chased Kṛṣṇa at his heels, and he would not allow her to overtake for fear. Hari, who cannot be conceived in the mind by Yogis in deep meditation, now takes his flight out of fear. The speed of the noble lady was however arrested by the dimensions of her hips. In her haste, the fine bunch of her hair opened and the malati flower over there dropped down.'

Any way, Kṛṣṇa allowed himself on some plea to be caught, and she now cried out in triumph:

Bhāṇḍa bhāṅgi ābe jāibi kothā:  
Khāibo āji Kṛṣṇa tora mātā. 696.

'Whither will you be going now after breaking down the milk-pot? O Kṛṣṇa, surely, today I will eat your head.' He now looked frightened; and Yaśodā would now chain him instead:

Nāhi ādi anta purbāpara:  
Pūrṇa Brahma jagata Īśwara.  
Tāhāṅka tanaya māni bale:  
Yaśodā bāndhanta urukhale. 698.  
Bāndhanta Kṛṣṇaka āni dhari:  
Nojore ānguli dui jari.  
Āru jari āni jorā dila:  
Sio dui āngule nātila. 699.  
Hena dekhi āro jari āni:  
Yaśodā bāndhanta tāni tāni.  
Śarīrara bala diā āte:  
Tathāpi āngula dui nāte. 700.  
Gr̥hata pāileka yata jari:  
Ehi mate juriā Sundarī.  
Urukhole-ere bāndhe cāpi:  
Nāte dui āngule tathāpi. 701.

'One who has no beginning, no end, no predecessor, no successor, who Himself is the perfect Ego and Lord of the Universe, it is Him that Yaśodā calls her son and binds to the great mortar per force. She catches and binds Kṛṣṇa, but the string ran short by two fingers' breadth. She got more strings and even then it ran short of the same. Seeing this, she got more strings and bound Kṛṣṇa as tight as possible. She fastened him with all the strength in her body, and yet it ran short the same. Yaśodā joined all the strings that could be found in the house and fastened Kṛṣṇa quite close to the great mortar, and yet, the strings ran short the same.

This problem is rather allegorical than arithmetical. Kṛṣṇa cannot be bound by anything else than love, and by any one but a true devotee. Yaśodā's love was beyond question, but she had two defects. She yet had "aham" (Me) and "mama" (Mine). The last trace of her 'self' was not still gone; she still clung to her apparent authorship and outward belongings. So she was about to bind, but could not do so even for two fingers' breadth. The milk-maids laughed. Yaśodā perspired so much wondering and worrying over it. Her precious pride in her

authorship (aḥam) and her vanity over her belongings (mama) was gone. She has now felt: 'I cannot bind, and Kṛṣṇa cannot be my son.' Her love was now suddenly free from the two slight (finger-breadth) defects. It became full and Kṛṣṇa was now automatically bound.

Hena dekhi prabhu Nārāyaṇa:  
Snehe laila āpuni bandhana. 703.

The great prayer of Brahmā in its eighth poem is significant from its emphasis on the superiority of a devotee's life.

Garbhata thākante udarata ghāle pawe:  
Tāra aparādhaka nadhare yena māwe.  
Tomāra kuṣṭite āmi ācho carācara:  
Hena jāni kṣamiyoka doṣa Dāmodara. 750.  
Ito Brahmā pada prabhu āmāka nalāge:  
Kīṭa patangata janma hauka karma bhāge.  
Tomāra Bhaktara māje huyā eka jana:  
Sewā kari thāko prabhu tomāra caraṇa. 751.  
Kino dhanya dheni Gopī ito Gokulara:  
Yāra stanya pāne tripta bhailā Dāmodara. 752.  
Kino punya kari Gokulara brikṣe tṛṇe:  
Tomāra caraṇa reṇu pāwe pratidine. 753.  
Śarīraka mai bolo buddhi bhaila hata:  
Hīata harāila tumi khojo bāhirata. 754.  
Brindābane tṛṇa haibo teve mahābhāga:  
Pāibo Vrajabāsira caraṇa reṇu lāga. 755.

'As a child in the womb strikes his mother with its feet and yet she takes no exception to it, so, O Dāmodar, pardon our faults, for all of us in the world really live within you. I would not prefer, O Lord, this great prestige of being a Brahmā. Let me be born and re-born as worms and insects. O Lord, let me be one of your humblest devotees to serve at your feet. How fortunate are the cows and milk-maids of Gokul, for Dāmodar has been nutritioned by their milk. What merits have the trees and creepers of Gokul acquired that they receive the dust of your feet every day?....Our intellects have become so dull that we identify ourselves with our bodies, and by missing you in our hearts we look for you outside. I would deem myself very fortunate if I could be born as a creeper of Vraja to receive the dusts of the feet of its inhabitants.' When Kṛṣṇa got down in the lake, the Kālī snake bit him and he lay dead to all appearance:

Dekhi śiśu sava marila prāi:  
Dhanugaṇe āura tṛṇa nakhāi.  
Kṛṣṇaka cāhiā thākila rahi:  
Cakṣura lota dhāre jāi bahi. 772.  
Kṛṣṇara sundara badana cāi:  
Yaśodā kāndanta guna barnai.  
Godhuli kone jāibe baṁsi, bāi:  
Kone moka gaiā buliba āi. 779.  
Dhulā jāri kāka karāibō snāna:  
Kone karibeka gorasa pāna.  
Kāka bichāi dibō sītala tulī:

Dākibō kāka jāga Kṛṣṇa buli. 780.

Sundara badane bajāyā beṇu:

Prabhāte kone carāibeka dhenū.

Ki bhaila āji Kṛṣṇa mora Bāpa:

Mariō nerāibō tora santāpa. 781.

'Seeing (Kṛṣṇa, in swoon) the children felt themselves all but dead. The cows would eat grass no more; they looked steadfastly at Kṛṣṇa, and tears flowed down their eyes.... Yaśodā came singing the glories of Kṛṣṇa and wept looking at the face of Kṛṣṇa. 'O, who will again come home at dusk by playing on the flute? Who will call me mother once more? Whom shall I wash daily by removing the dust off his body? Who will drink milk from my hand anymore? For whom again shall I prepare the bed? Whom shall I once more awake in the morning saying 'O my Kṛṣṇa, arise'? Who again with a beautiful face play on the flute and go to keep the cows in the field with the rising sun? O my son, Kṛṣṇa, what has happened to you? Your bereavement shall survive my death.'

RASA KRĪDA: The eleventh book of the Kīrttan-Ghoṣā is Rāsa-Krīda. The Bhāgawata story is retold here in eighteen poems dwelling on the salient points, by Śaṅkardew. In the beautiful autumnal night of full moon, Kṛṣṇa played on his flute on the bank of the Yamunā, and the milk-maids left their daily jobs, restless and beside themselves in passion to meet him. Kṛṣṇa feigned not to know their minds, wondered why they came at all, showed the misfortunes that might attend. Among other things, he said:

Ulati Vrajaka jāhā kānde śiśugaṇa.

Tāsambāka pratipālī piāyoka stana. 823.

Upapati same krīra garihita karma:

Svāmika śūśrūṣā kula strira mahā dharma.

Yadibā āmāka snehe āilā gopigaṇa:

Moka āve dekhilā sijila prayajana. 324.

Vidūrate thāki kare śravaṇa-kīrttana:

Bārhe mota bhakati nirmala howe mana.

Dekhante śunante sadā helā howe mati:

Jāniā ḡhate thāki karibā bhakati. 825.

'Go back to Vraja. Your infants weep. Give them your breasts and take care of them. The greatest virtue of a chaste wife is to serve her husband. Playing with a person other than one's own husband must be condemned. If, O milk-maids, you would say that you come for the love of me, your desire is fulfilled at the sight of myself. Hear and sing my glories from a distance, then your Love will thrive, and your minds will be purified. If you see and hear me every day, you may be neglectful. So stay at home and have love for me.'

The milk-maids, in their utter disappointment, slowly replied:

Bhakta-batsala tomāka jāni:

Kene bolā hena ḡhātuka vāṇī. 829.

Kahilā yito kula strira karma;

Tomāte āchoka śīśava dharma. 830.

Tumi ātmā hena jāni samprati.

Tomātese kare bhakate rati. 831.

'You are known to be ever obliging to your devotees. Why then do you utter such cruel words....What you have said about the duties of a chaste woman, let them all merge in you....Your devotees are attached to you knowing that you yourself are the Soul of the world.' They further said:

Tomāka eriā nacale bhari:

Vrajaka gaiā ki karibo Hari. 833.

Jwale kāmānala tomāra gīte:

Nimāyoka tāka adharāmrite. 834.

Nāmārā puriā īṣata hāsi:

Puruṣa-bhūṣana kario dāsi. 835.

Tomāra śuniā amrita-gīta:

Nohibe moha kona strīra citta.

Āchoka āna brikṣa paśu pakṣi:

Preme pulakita tomāka dekhi. 837.

'O Hari, what shall we do going back to Vraja? Our legs do not carry us away from you....Your music fans the fire of carnal desire in us. Do put it out by showering the nectar from your lips....Do not burn us to ashes by your gentle smile; Oh, the Ornament of Man, make us your slaves....What woman is there whose heart will not be charmed on hearing your ambrosial songs? Not to speak of woman, the very trees, the animals and birds are all in a thrill of the sensation of love when they see you.'

Compliance of Kṛṣṇa, after long, generated pride in them, and he disappeared forthwith to remove their pride. This had its desired effect and the milk-maids became mad after him once more, and were left crazy by his separation. The deep feeling of absence in the Gopīs has been so beautifully expressed in the short metre.

Ucca brikṣa dekhi sodhe sādari:

Śunio aswaththa bata pākari.

Yāhānte dekhilā Nanda-Kumāra:

Nenta curi kari citta āmāra. 854.

He Kurubaka Aśoka campā:

Kahiā kathā karā anukampā.

Māninīra darpa kariā cura:

Jānāhā Kṛṣṇa yānta kata dūra. 855.

Obā Tulasi samidhān diā:

Tumi Govindara caraṇa- priyā.

Yāhānte dekhilā Nanda-kumāra:

Prāṇato adhika priya āmāra. 856.

He yāti yuthi sakhi mālati:

Kṛṣṇa paraśe ki labhilā gati.

Samaste Gopīra jīwana- dhana:

Dekhilā yāhānte Nanda-nandana. 857.

He āma-jāma vela vakula:

Nāhi upakāri tomāra tula.

Kṛṣṇara birahe dekho āndhāra:  
 Kowā kaika gaila prāṇa āmāra. 858.  
 Kṛṣṇa guṇa gānte prema opaje:  
 Kṛṣṇate mana samudāi maje. 863.

'Seeing the tall trees the milk-maids enquire of them full of affection: 'Hear us, O Aswaththa; hear us, O Bata, O Pākari; you must have seen the son of Nanda, while making his escape by stealing our hearts. O Kurubaka, O Asoka, O Campā, do this act of compassion by telling us how far must Kṛṣṇa have gone after crushing the pride of beauty of these women. O Tulasi plant, Thou art much beloved of Govinda's feet, please make me a reply—'Have you seen on the way the son of Nanda, dearer to us than our own life? O friends, the plants of Yāti, Yuthi and Malati flowers, have you been delivered of this world by a touch of Kṛṣṇa? Have you seen on the way the son of Nanda, the life and soul of all the milk-maids? O Mango, O Jām, Bel and Bakul, surely none else are more helpful than yourselves; we see a veil of darkness before us in separation of Kṛṣṇa. Do tell us whither goes our Soul.... Thus singing the glories of Kṛṣṇa, love was generated in them and their hearts became drowned in Kṛṣṇa.' More of the human element is expressed by Śaṅkardew in the love-complaints of the Gopīs:

Śarata kālara                      bikaśa padmara  
                     Udarake śrika ninde:  
 Henaya netrara                      katākṣe āmāka  
                     Mārīchā tumi Govinde. 892.  
 Nikinilā dāsi                      bhajiloho āsi  
                     Gītate huyā dagadha:  
 Katākṣe mārile                      badha nalāge ki  
                     Astre kātīleka badha. 893.  
 Vraja hante dhenu                      cāribāka yāhā,  
                     Āmāra mane asukha:  
 Jāno pāda padme                      tṛṇa śilā lāgi  
                     Prāṇanāthe pānta duhkha. 899.

'O Govinda, you are killing us by a glance of the eyes that hold the lotuses of autumn in full bloom, in contempt. You have not bought us slaves. We have offered ourselves so being charmed by your flute. Is it murder only to kill by weapons and no murder to kill by side-long glances? You go from Vraja to keep cows, and we are unhappy at hearts lest the Lord of our life should be hurt by blades of grass or by stones in his lotus feet.'

It may be observed that unlike as in some other parts of India, Kṛṣṇa here is concerned with all Gopīs, symbolising all lives, as originally in the Bhāgavat, and not with one Gopī in particular.

Śaṅkardew then interprets *Rāsa-Kṛīḍā* and defends how it does not encroach the moral latitude of society.

Dehata yār nāhi abhāṅkār:  
 Tāhāra karmata nāhi bicār. 972.  
 Sringār rase yāra āche rati:  
 Āke śuni hauka nirmala mati.

Bhakatar pade āpuni Hari:  
 Krīrhilā range nara-deha dhari. 975.  
 Ito Rāsa krīrha kathā Kṛṣṇar.  
 Ekānta citte śune yito nar.  
 Kṛṣṇata bhakati bārhibe tār.  
 Kāma sāgare sukhe haiba pār. 978.  
 Ito kāma jaya Kṛṣṇar kathā.  
 Śunā nara-deha nakarā br̥thā. 979.

'There can be no judging of actions of one who does not identify himself with his body....Let those who have carnal desires have their minds purified by hearing this. For the good of his devotees, Hari assumed the human form and played this....He who hears this in wrapt attention shall have his *bhakti* increased and shall easily cross the sea of carnal desires. Hear all these glories of Kṛṣṇa that will enable you to conquer carnal desires. Do not abuse this your human form.'

KAMSA BADH: The twelfth book is *Kaṁsa Badh*, consisting of fifteen poems. Śaṅkardew depicts the acute feelings of the milk-maids, in the brief *jhunā* metre adding to the emotion, in connexion Kṛṣṇa's leaving for Mathurā, which, both for the music of verse and felicity of expression, is so remarkable.

Rathe cari larilā Murāri:  
 Pari pari kānde gopa-nari.  
 Harir birahe dehā tāwe:  
 Yena bhaila bātula swabhāwe. 1053.  
 Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa buli geri deya:  
 Āmār prāṇak kone neya.  
 Krura Akrura bhaila bairi:  
 Jiwa kārhi neya kene kari. 1054.  
 Kino Hari nidāruṇa bhaila:  
 Gakula anātha kari gaila.  
 Kṛṣṇa bine ki kare jīwane.  
 Āura kone yāibe Brindābane. 1055.  
 Prabhāte rākhiba kone dhenu:  
 Kone bāiba sulalita beṇu.  
 Kone cāiba katākṣe nirikṣi:  
 Jurāiba hridaya kāka dekhi. 1056.  
 Kone diba bāṁśir niswān:  
 Ki dekhi rākhibo āve prāṇ.  
 Āmār jīwane nāhi sukh:  
 Āura nedekhibo Kṛṣṇa mukh. 1057.  
 Nīla ākuncita yār keś:  
 Śire ratna kirīṭi subeś.  
 Bhruvayuga Madanar cāp.  
 Darāṣane hare hridi-tāp. 1058.  
 Rucikar kamala locan:  
 Sudhā sama madhur bacan.  
 Susama lalāt gaṇḍa sthal:  
 Cāru karṇe makar kuṇḍal. 1059.  
 Nāsā tila kusuma sundar:

Śobhe ati aruṇa adhar.  
 Daśana dārhimba dibya pānti:  
 Hāsyē jine candramār kānti. 1060.  
 Kambu kanthe kaustubha prakāśe:  
 Surya yene uḍita ākāśe.  
 Siṃha bandha skandha suprasanna:  
 Bhuja yuga ratnara molāna. 1061.  
 Keyur kankan tāta jwale:  
 Ratnar guliā śobhe gale.  
 Hiāt sribatsa kare kānti:  
 Yena meghe balākār pānti. 1062.  
 Pītabastre sobhe tanu kālā:  
 Āpāda lambita vanamālā:  
 Tāte pari aneka bhramare:  
 Madhu lobhe pariā gunjare. 1063.  
 Bakṣasthale mukutār hār:  
 Ākāśi Gangār yena dhār.  
 Ratnar mekhalā kati māje:  
 Soṇar kinkinī tāte bāje. 1064.  
 Karikar uru nirupam.  
 Carañ pankaj manoram.  
 Dhawaja braja ankuse ankit.  
 Ratnamay nūpure ranjit. 1064.  
 Bhakatar hriday ranjan:  
 Nedekhibo sihen carañ.  
 Kandarpa kotiko rūpe jini:  
 Gokule prakāśe yadumaṇi. 1066.

'Kṛṣṇa left (for Mathurā) on the chariot and the milk-maids lay weeping on the earth. Their bodies burnt as it were for the separation of Kṛṣṇa and they almost became insane by nature. They shouted "Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa"... 'O, who takes away our life itself? The hypocrite Akurura has become our enemy. How has he snatched away the very Soul out of our bodies. O Hari, how cruel have you been'. You have left Gokul so helpless. What avails our life without Kṛṣṇa? Who will go anywhere to Brindāban? Who will keep the cows in the morning? Who will play on the flute so sweetly? Who will cast a side-long glance at us? Whose appearance will set our hearts at rest? Who will signify his arrival by a note on the flute? For what hopes shall we live any more? Our life will know no happiness any further; for we shall no more have a sight of Kṛṣṇa's face. Oh! for the sight of him who has the blue curls of hair and beautiful crown of gems on his head, whose eye-brows are like Cupid's bow removing all the agonies of heart instantly. His lotus-eyes are charming, his sweet words are like the nectar. His forehead and cheeks are symmetrical and earrings jingle in his beautiful ears. His nose is beautiful like the *tila* flower and his lips shine like the rising sun. His teeth are like two rows of pomegranate seeds, and his smile outdoes the lustre of the moon. The *kaustubha* necklace beautifies his conch-like neck and it appears like the rising of the sun. His shoulders are beautiful as those of the lion and his arms are like the lotus-stem ornamented with gems. Ornaments decorate the hands, and chains of gems beautify the neck. The



curl of hair beautifies his chest like lines of cranes in the clouds. The yellow cloth beautifies his black body as does the garland of wild flowers flowing down to his legs. There a number of black bees hum in the hope of getting honey. A garland of pearls beautifies the chest like a Gangā from heaven. He has the lower garment of gems, and chains of gold jingle there. His thighs are beautiful as the trunk of an elephant and his lotus-feet are charming. The three characteristic signs of Kṛṣṇa's feet were these and they are beautified by the jingling ornaments of gems. Oh, no longer shall we see those feet that are themselves ornaments in the hearts of devotees. Kṛṣṇa, the necklace of the Yadu race, used to shine in Gokul outdoing crores of Cupids in beauty.'

Then Akrura's excellent prayer with such touches:

Nājāni loke āna dewa pūje:  
Sio bidhihīne tomāka jaje.  
Yehena nada-nadi samudāi:  
Aneka pathe sāgaraka yāi. 1096.

'Through ignorance people worship other gods. Such anti-religious people too really worship you: for all rivers, great and small, actually run on to the sea through different ways.'

The twelfth poem gives the interesting preamble to the duel, Kṛṣṇa and Balarām were to encounter:

Karilā prakāsa Rāma same samājata:  
Dekhe daśa prakāre Kṛṣṇaka sibelāta.  
Māle bole kino bajra sama kalewara:  
Anyā jane bole ehentese Narabara. 1182.  
Nāriganē bole mūrṭti dharila Madane:  
Āmārese bandhu buli māne gopaganē.  
Āmārese śāstā bole duṣṭa rājācaya:  
Vasudewa Daiwakiyo bolaya tanaya. 1183.  
Kamse bole ehi Kṛṣṇa antaka āmāra:  
Ajnānisakale bole Nandara Kumāra.  
Yogiganē bole ehentese Brahmatattwa:  
Bṛṣṇi vāmse bole ente kulara daiwata. 1184.  
Kāchiā āchaya yena Nata dui prāi:  
Nabhaila tripiti loka duiro rūpa cāi. 1185.  
Cakṣuwe piyaya yena celeke jihbāi:  
Bāhuwe ālingi nāsikāi śunge prāi. 1186.

'Kṛṣṇa made his appearance along with Balarām before the audience. On this occasion people saw Kṛṣṇa in ten different forms. The wrestler thought him to be one with a body hard as thunderbolt. Others thought him to be the Supreme among men. The women saw in him the Cupid himself. The milkmen thought him to be their companion. The wicked kings knew him to be their chastiser. Vasudewa and Daiwaki found their son in him. Kamsa imagined Kṛṣṇa to be his destroyer. People unawares thought him to be Nanda's son. Those divine meditators knew him to be Brahma (Ego) personified. The people of Vṛṣṇi family imagined him to be the god of their line.... The two brothers now well-dressed looked rather like two dancers, and people's thirst in seeing

them was not quenched. They would drink their beauty with their eyes, lick it with their tongues, embrace it with their arms and smell with their noses.'

GOPĪ-UDDHAVA SAMBAD is thirteenth book of *Kīrttan-Ghoṣā* describing the reactions which the news of Kṛṣṇa at Mathurā initiated in the Gopīs, and reflections of Uddhava.

Uddhawe Gopīr dekhiā bhāw:  
 Bismay huyā śiharāilā gāw:  
 Nandar Vraje yata Gopijāk:  
 Śire bando tāna pada dhulāk: 1255.  
 Rātri dine gāwe Hari caritra:  
 Tinio lokak kare pavitra. 1256.  
 Kino torā sawe karilā puṇya:  
 Sadāye goā Govindara guṇa:  
 Harit majila ati hṛday:  
 Kino tomāsār bhāgya uday. 1257.  
 Harir arthe pati putra eri:  
 Karilā puṇjā yena sawe ceri.  
 Jānilō saṁsār tarilā sukhe:  
 Barnāibō āra kata mor mukhe 1258.

'Uddhawa saw the feeling of the milk-maids and wondered, his hair standing on an end. 'O milk-maids of all Vajra ruled by Nanda, I would bow down and receive the dust of their feet with my head. They sing the glories of Hari day and night, and purify the three worlds..... O, what merit have you acquired that you can sing the glories of Govinda every day. O, how your fortune smiles on you that your hearts dissolve in Kṛṣṇa. You have become maids again by sacrificing your husbands and sons for the sake of Hari. What more should I say? You are sure to be delivered from all miseries of this world.'

KUEJIR ARU AKRURAR VANCHĀ PURAN are the fourteenth and fifteenth books. These stories are used as two pegs whereon to hang Śaṅkardew's pet theories:

Yata nada-nadi	sio tirtha hay
Śilar pratimā dew;	
Tesambe pavitra	kare yeve punu
Bahu kāl kare sew.	
Dekhile mātrake	bhakate pavitra
Kare lok nirantar;	
Dewe tirthē jānā	bhakat janar
Anek mahādantar.	1282.

'Rivers, great and small, may be sacred for pilgrimage; stone and images may be equivalent to gods. They can purify a person after they are worshipped for a long long period. But all persons can be purified immediately at the sight of a Bhakta. This is the great difference between a god or a sacred place, and a Bhakta.'

JARASANDHA ARU KALAJAVAN BADH, MUCUKUNDA STUTI, SYMANTAK HARAN are the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth books. The last is about possessing the gem of Syamanta, virtues of which have been briefly described as:

Maṇir mahimā ki kaibō ār:  
 Suvarṇa nite sraṇe aṣṭa bhār.  
 Jīthāṇe thāke sito Syamantak:  
 Nāhike durbhikṣa māri-marak. 1415.  
 Nāhike byādhi byāghra sarpa bhay;  
 Eko upasarga nopaje tai. 1416.

'O, what should I say about the glories of this gem? It yields eight pairs of loads of gold daily. No famine, no epidemic, no diseases, no fear of tigers' attacks or snake bites should be apprehended there.' The fight with Jāmbawanta is described in the short jhunā metre very aptly to echo quick and sharp action which the rhythm and music alone can express.

Hena śuni Jāmbawanta;	Dhāilā mahā valawanta.
Nicini Svāmik pāche;	Dharilanta juddha kāche. 1429.
Sāmānya manuṣya buli;	Mahā krodde gaila jvali.
Nājāni prabhāwa ati;	Lagāileka hatāhati. 1430.
Duiō huyā mahā krudha;	Lagāileka ghora juddha.
Duiō matāṅgar līlā;	Bariṣe parvata śīla. 1431.
Kato beli hāne gāch;	Kato kope cāpe kāch.
Yujilanta māla-bāndhe;	Dhari bhari bhari chānde. 1432.
Duiro duiko nāhi tuṣṭi;	Hāne vajra sama muṣṭi.
Mānsār kāraṇe yen;	Yujanta dugotā sen. 1433.
Keho bale nohe kṣiṇ;	Yujanta āthāis din. 1434.

This poem is onomatopoeic and echoes sense of this duel fight between Kṛṣṇa and Jāmbawanta. The metre has also been effective in producing the heroic sentiment (*Vira rasa*).

NARADAR KṚṢṆA DARŚAN, VIPRA PUTRA ANAYAN: In between, in a recent book of some later publishers is *Rukmini Prem-Kalah*, consisting of four poems evidently of inferior merit. Both contents and subject matter and other circumstances suggest its spurious character. In Vipra Putra Anayan, Śaṅkardew describes Kṛṣṇa flying through space with Arjuna and meeting his own counterpart in heaven. This is again in short *Ekāwali* metre to show quickness of speed in effect.

Sāto khān prithivī erāilā:  
 Gaiā sāto sāgar charāilā.  
 Dhari mahā manojay gati:  
 Gaila lokālokar sibhiti. 1552.  
 Prabeśilā ghor andhakāre:  
 Ghorā āra yāibaka nāpāre.  
 Hena dekhi Yōgeśwar Hari.  
 Āgak hānilā cakra dhari. 1553.  
 Mahā raṣmi pūnje pasarāi:



LILA MALA AND SRIKRISNAR VAIKUNTHA PRAYAN come last. In *Lilā Mālā*, within the small range of seven poems, is described the entire life of Kṛṣṇa, and then *Śrī Kṛṣṇa Vaikunṭha Prayāṇ*, where Kṛṣṇa gives his last and the most essential advice to Uddhawa.

Uddhwaka sambodhi mātanta Kṛṣṇe pāche:  
Karma-bandha erāiba pravandha yāra āche.  
Vaiṣṇavara sanga sito laiba prathamata:  
Mohora caritra śunibeka bhakatata. 1818.  
Mora nāma Kīrtana kariba sarvākṣaṇe:  
Hṛdayata mora rūpa cintiba yatane.  
Mora jaśa gāyā yito kare gīta-nṛtya:  
Nāhi tāra bhay sito bhaila Kṛta-kṛtya. 1819.

'Kṛṣṇa then addressed Uddhawa and said 'He who desires to escape the sufferings for his past actions must first of all find the company of Vaiṣṇavas. He should then hear about my glories from sincere devotees of mine. He must sing my glories every moment. He must carefully think of my form in his heart. Thus he who can sing and dance by declaring my glories should of course entertain no fear and he is sure to be sanctified.'

Samasta bhūtata byyāpi ācho mai Hari:  
Savāka mānibā tumi Viṣṇu buddhi kari. 1820.  
Brāhmanar Cāndalar nibicāri kul:  
Dātāt corat yen dr̥ṣṭi eka tul.  
Nīcat sādhu yār bhaila eka jñān:  
Tāhākese pandit buliā sarvajān. 1821.  
Bīṣeṣata manuṣyagaṇat yito nare.  
Viṣṇu buddhi bhāwe sarbadāi mānya kare.  
Ir̥ṣā asūyā tiraskār ahaṁkāra:  
Save naṣṭa howe teve tāwakṣaṇe tār. 1822.  
Dekhi sakhigane jono hāse āsi berhi:  
Mai sādhu ito cor hena lajjā eri.  
Kukur Cāndāl gardabharo ātmā Rām:  
Jāniā savāko pari karibā pranām. 1823.  
Samasta bhūtata Viṣṇu buddhi nohe jāwe:  
Kāyamanobākya abhyāsibā ehi bhāwe.  
Viṣṇumay dekhe yito samasta jagate:  
Jiwante mukuta howe acir kālata. 1824.  
Sakal prāṇik dekhibeka ātmā sam.  
Upāi madhyat ito ati mukhyatam. 1825.  
Bhakatase mor hridi jāniba niścay:  
Bhakatjanar jānā āmise hṛday.  
Mai bine bhakate nicinte kichu ān:  
Bhakatata pare mai nicinto ho ān. 1829.

'I, who am God, pervade every object. Do therefore regard all and every thing as though they were God Himself. Seek not to know the caste of a Brahman nor of an outcaste. Look to a thief with the same eyes as to a great donor. He, who thinks the noble and the ignoble as the same, can alone be regarded as an omniscient scholar. Envy, malice, condemnation and pride forthwith vanish from the heart of a person who

particularly regards all human beings as Viṣṇu. Abandon all such false conceptions as 'I am a saint, he is a thief, I may be a laughing-stock in the circle of my friends'; know that the soul of the dog, of the outcaste and of the donkey is that of God Himself, and prostrate before them with all your heart. Practise in person, mind and speech such things until and unless you can thus feel that every object is no other than Viṣṇu. He is at once free while he is yet in the corporeal cage who can see this world consisting alone of Brahma. This is the best way: consider every being as yourself.... Know ye, that the Bhaktas are my heart and I am the heart of the Bhaktas who have no other thought than that of Myself, and I have no other thought but of them.'

Śaṅkardew's *Kīrttan-Ghoṣā* practically ends here. *Sahasra Nām Britānta*, consisting of six poems by Ratnakar Kandali; *Uresā Barnan* by Śaṅkardew himself; *Ghunucā Kīrttan* by Sridhar Kandali, are appended to the collections of K. G., but they form no integral part of it.

(c) CRADLE OF ASSAMESE PLAYS AND PROSE: "Cradle of the drama rested on the altar", said of Europe in general and England in particular, is true to a great extent of India in general and Assam in particular. The Assamese drama was also born under the shadow of the Nāmghar (Prayer-house) and nurtured for religious purposes. The history of transition from the ancient religious performances to the modern plays has also a parallel in the growth of drama in England. The first stage in the development of the English drama is characterised by the performance of these plays in the church, and the second stage by their emergence therefrom into the market-places in the fourteenth century and now entrusted with the guilds. The third stage is marked by replacement of the Mystery and Miracle plays by the Morality and Interlude, the serious and comic elements inter-woven in the Mystery and Miracle now dissociating, the morality presenting the serious and the Interlude the lighter side of things. Thus while the Interlude was clearly meant to satisfy the instinct of amusement, the Morality was directly didactic and was popular till the end of the sixteenth century, and thrived in the heyday of Shakespeare's fame.

Drama is said to be the oldest of all imitative arts. In order that the drama may be effective, the story must show some conflict or clash between man and his surroundings. There is a tragedy when this conflict is a serious one, with an unhappy ending, and a comedy with a happy ending for the hero and heroine, and it is a farce when the clash itself is trivial.

The history of the Assamese drama is very long and old indeed, older surely than the drama of any Indian modern language and older even than the regular English dramas at least by century. The first Assamese drama is certainly *Cihna Yātrā* (literally, a play with painted

scenes) and the first theatre is the performance of it in 1468. As a matter of fact, neither introduction of scenes nor the regular drama in Europe in general can be ascribed to a period earlier than the seventeenth century; and in England in particular regular dramatic works really began in the latter part of the sixteenth century with such predecessors of Shakespeare as Marlowe, and the Globe Theatre which Shakespeare had immortalised was actually established in 1599.

**ORIGINALITY:** While the religious origin of the Assamese drama does not admit of any doubt, it is by no means easy to trace the real source of the first form of the Assamese drama. It was originally styled as Anka; but to call it an imitation of the Anka type of Sanskrit drama or a corrupt form of Angikā Abhinaya, may only betray ignorance of facts. These dramas consist of one Act; but even then they have nothing in common with the one-Act dramas of Sanskrit. Also the word *Nāt* used in naming these dramas, as distinguished from *Nātaka*, may probably have been derived from the Vedic Narta or Natta signifying 'dance'. The word 'Yātrā' often employed in the name of many of these dramas such as *Cihna-Yātrā*, *Rāsā-Yātrā*, *Janma Yātrā*, probably reveal their opera nature. As a matter of fact, poems and songs constitute almost the bulk of these dramas and the prose-pieces are only secondary things.

As in countries like Greece in Europe, so in India, it was customary to dance about the altar singing songs of prayer. Remnants of such practices in Assam are in the Ojā-Pāli and Dewdhani institutions which are probably pre-Śaṅkardewite. Ojā-Pāli is a party consisting of one Ojā (the Master) and a few Pālis (companions) who adopt a mythological story, weave it into beautiful songs and sing them in chorus in suitable occasions, with the help of cymbals. The Ojā not only sings and guides his disciples, but also plays with rhythmic movements of his body. The Ojā also carries on a dialogue with the Dāinā-Pāli, the lieutenant among his followers, on the theme leading to its revelation, which is to be noted. Biographers have recorded that this practice was followed by Śaṅkardew early in his nām-Kīrttan (Daityāri, v. 286). Like the new musical instruments, and preliminaries which he introduced, there may of course be many elements in his nāt (drama) and 'bhāwanā' (performance) which he invented, but the skeleton might probably be here.

Any such recognition of contribution of indigenous folk-music to these Vaiṣṇavite dramas may not mean a denial of any classical influence. *Anka* is the generic name for these plays (as in 'Vaikuntha nagara, patata lekhiā, *Anka* karihanta tār'—Rāmcaran); and it is the

name of a type of Sanskrit drama with which it agrees at least in being a play of one Act. *Bar-Dhemālī* and such other preliminaries (*Pūrva Ranga*) are requisites of an Assamese performance as in Sanskrit. *Nāndī* (benediction), a prologue in Sanskrit in the form of an eulogy of the presiding deity is an essential in Sanskrit as well as in Asamīyā drama. Similarly, a *prarocanā* (propitiation), and *āmukha* (introduction) with *prastāvanā* (induction). Sanskrit verses which form an integral part of a classical drama including the *vija* (germ) of the *vastu* (subject-matter) and embracing *vinḍu* (elements), also serve the same purpose in the Asamīyā dramas. Śaṅkardew alone is known to have composed 179 Sanskrit verses for his *ankas*, 161 of them in the *arustuva* metre, and the rest in such a variety of metres as *Upajāti*, *Indravajra*, *Upendravajra*, *mālinī*, *vasantatilaka*, *mandākrāntā* and so forth. *Sandhi* (juncture), *rasa* (sentiment), *mukti-mangala* (concluding benedictions) are other matters of resemblance. (*Ankāvalī*, Introduction, pp. xiv-xxiii).

**DIFFERENCES:** But disagreements of the Asamīyā *ankas* with Sanskrit dramas are also not few and far between. Assamese *ankas* (Acts) are not subdivided into *Garbhāṅkas* (scenes) as in Sanskrit. Assamese dramas are conspicuous by the absence of the *Viduṣakas* (Jester) which is a standing character of the Sanskrit drama in general, this comic part being supplemented by extra players. Songs in Sanskrit dramas are sung by individual characters or in *nepathya* (elsewhere): but in an Assamese play it is sung by the *Gāyan-bāyan* (the band of musicians). Even in the so-called similarities, noted above, there are considerable dissimilarities in particulars which mark the great originality of Śaṅkardew. One such important point is the *Sūtradhār*, having almost nothing but the name in common.

Admixture of Vrajabuli in Śaṅkardew's songs and dramas mislead uncritical critics, Asamīyās not excluded, to interpret it as nothing short of borrowing. They carry it beyond bounds when they unhesitatingly say that Śaṅkardew's *Pārijāt Haraṇ nāt* is almost a duplicate of a Maithili drama of the same name by Umāpati. This betrays not only an ignorance of the compositions of the two dramas, but also of the histories of the two literatures. The publication of the exhaustive *History of Maithili Literature* by Dr. Jayakanta Mishra has now left nothing to grope in the dark. Umāpati flourished during the reign of Kings Narapati Thākur (1692-93—1703-04) and Rāghav Siṃha of Mithilā, and was thus junior to Śaṅkardew by about two centuries and a half. Even as a work of art, that of Śaṅkardew is decidedly superior, whence rather an influence of Śaṅkardew on Umāpati appears



more probable. The learned author of the *History* himself gives a broad suggestion in this regard, nor is this unexpected.

The Kosi (Kausika) river long used to form the common boundary between old Kingdoms of Kāmarūpa and Mithila (Neog's *Introduction to Assam*). The great Naraka founded the first Aryan empire in this eastern region, Prāggyōtisa, being brought up in the house of Janaka, the king of Mithilā (*Kālikā Purāṇa*, c. 700-1000 A.D.). Mahābhūti Varman, an ancestor of Bhāskar Varmā annexed one part of east Mithila to his empire and gave land-grants to Maithili scholars in the fifth century, and such relations continued at least till the middle of the seventh century. Comparatively of late king Viśwa Simha got one Sārvabhauma as his priest from Mithilā. One Narahari Kāyastha was recruited as a chief minister of the Koc Kingdom of Assam, which post his son Payonidhi inherited by merit. Payonidhi's son, Kavindra Pātra, an Assamese Sir Philip Sidney, warrior-poet, wrote the gist of the entire Mahābhārata in Assamese, whose successors are the inheritors of Gauripur Raj of Assam. King Dhana Manikya (died 1515 A.D.) and other Tripura kings of Assam got several Maithili scholars and musicians to their States. In religious and social matters too, Mithila is allied to Assam till today, the *Smritis* etc. being still common.

THE ASSAMESE SUTRADHAR (the thread-holder), unlike the one of the Sanskrit drama is almost the alpha and omega of the "bhāwanā" (performance) in Assamese. He not only sings the Nāndi, or the benediction of the classical drama, and explains the purpose of the play, but also announces the advent of the actors from the 'co-ghar' (green-room) in due courses, connects and explains events and makes the last prayer of the play as he does the first or the Nāndi. Practically the Sūtradhār is the soul of a 'bhāwanā' and for this is selected a man of versatile genius proficient in all arts, singing and playing, dancing and acting. He is present in the stage from the beginning to the end of the play.

THE USE OF A MODERN INDIAN PROSE is another prominent feature of the early Assamese drama. Vidyāpati (1360-1448) also employed prose in his dramas works, but it was Sanskrit prose; and only the songs were in Maithili. As a matter of fact, these prose passages of the Assamese dramas are the earliest specimens of modern Indian prose. Intermixed with Vrajabuli, Śaṅkardew's songs and dramatic works paved the way for a *lingua franca* at least for north-India Vaiṣṇavite poets. Śaṅkardew used Maithili for his prose at least a couple of centuries before Maithili prose was born in Mithila itself, thus bearding the lion in his own den.

**PATNI PRASAD:** Rāmcaran details all about the composition and performance of Śaṅkardew's first drama of *Cihna Yātrā*, in 1468. It was followed, not soon after perhaps, by the drama *Patnī Prasād* in about the thirties of the sixteenth century. Rāmcaran (v. 2789) says that this drama was played on the occasion of the funeral ceremony of Mādhawdew's mother in Barpetā. The drama deals with Kṛṣṇa's early life and shows how the Brāhmiṇ women were favoured for their love of Kṛṣṇa in preference to their husbands who despite their ceremonies and rituals had no love of Kṛṣṇa (God) in their hearts. The drama abounds in beautiful songs and was perhaps composed to quiet his opponents.

The drama opens with a Sanskrit verse of salutation to Kṛṣṇa and then a Bhatimā (song) in Assamese, of considerable length, mixed with Vrajabuli. Then the Sūtradhār in Assamese prose, also mixed with Vrajabuli, declares the purpose of the drama: "Ahe sāmājika loka, jōhi jagataka Param-Guru Puruṣottam sohi Nanda-nandana rūpe kaho, anna prārthanā chale viprasavaka Karma garba dūra kayala: Patni-savaka prasād delaha: bālaksavak ṣarha rasa anna bhojan karāwala: sohi Patnī-prasād nāma Nāta: ohi sabhā madhye kautuke karaba: tāhe dekhaha, sunaha, nirantare Hari bola Hari." 'Ye people, the play called *Patnī-Prasād* (Favour to the Wives) showing how the Lord of the world, incarnated as a son of Nanda, by way of begging food, crushed the pride of the ritualistic Brahmans, gave favours to their wives and fed the cowherds sumptuously, will be staged in this gathering. See, hear, pronounce Hari incessantly.

This is immediately followed by one song of Rāg Kānāra, Parītāl, describing the comic figures of the ritualists, then Sūtradhār declaring the coming of Kṛṣṇa and his company, again followed by a song, Rāg Āsōārī, Ektāl, describing Kṛṣṇa. Then comes dialogues in Assamese prose mixed with Vrajabuli, and songs alternating. Finally the ritualists are brought into repentance, and their wives are extolled for being devoted to Kṛṣṇa.

**PARIJAT HARAN:** Rāmcaran refers to another drama named *Janma Yātra* composed by Śaṅkardew after his return from this second pilgrimage (v. 3414). It is also not extant; but one *Janma Yātrā Nāt* by Gopāl Ātā is there in its place. The fourth drama of Śaṅkardew is *Pārijāt Haran*, to which Rāmcaran refers (v. 3433). This drama soon succeeded *Janma Yātrā*, the two being composed about the thirties of the sixteenth century. References in it show that the latter was written at the request of his cousin, Jagatānanda, alias Rāmraī. This play written more than two centuries prior to the Maithili drama of the same name, might have been a specimen for Umāpati, the Maithili poet. The drama narrates how Kṛṣṇa appearing to fall a victim to the jealousy

of the two co-wives, Rukmiṇī and Satyabhāmā, was on the occasion reduced to the necessity of entering into a duel with Indra who in turn was goaded by his wife Sachi. The drama, though ending with the defeat of Indra and with the restoration of their friendship, leaves a lesson for the worldly persons not to be too much pinned to the world. It also relates, by the way, the death of Narakāsūra in the hands of Kṛṣṇa. The purport of the drama is revealed in the following speech addressed by the sage Nārada: "He Kṛṣṇa, Kāmātura puruṣaka aicana avasthā. Strī ye ājnā kare, se avasye karite lāge." The drama is interspersed with excellent songs of various descriptions; and juncture of the incidents of getting the divine flower and killing Naraka in one and the same theme produces excellent dramatic effect. With this drama Śaṅkardew appears to be a master of his dramatic technique and art, with variety in situations and rapidity in actions.

RAMVIJAYA, KALIYADAMAN: Śaṅkardew's drama of *Rām Vijay* is then referred to by Rāmānanda (vs. 1505-09), but this appears to be his last drama. In between *Rām Vijay* and *Pārijāt Haran*, there are several dramas. According to Lakṣmīnāth Bezbaruwa (*Śaṅkardew*, ch. X) these must have been composed at Pātbāusi, may be about the forties of the sixteenth century, and they all appear to be written at the instance of Rāmraī. *Kāliya Daman* evidently immortalises the final victory of Vaiṣṇavism over snake-worship which was once predominant in Mathurā itself, the home of Bhāgavatism, in the original. This drama illustrates the familiar mythological story how Kṛṣṇa even as a child, brought the wicked and proud snake Kāliya to his knees and how he was spared his life only by the interference of his wives who were of course much devoted to Kṛṣṇa. This drama among others shows how Śaṅkardew taking any story from the Bhāgawata, the Phoebus of the Puranas, uses also other works as *Harivaṃśa*, *Brahma-baibartta Purāṇ* and commentaries of Śrīdhara etc. The *Karuṇa rasa* (pathos sentiment) excels the heroic, and the entire drama is interspersed with excellent songs and prose pieces in dialogues as also in the proclamations of Sūtradhār. *Kelī Gopāl* (Rāsa Krīdhā) apparently shows the *śṛṅgār rasa* (the erotic sentiment) in full play; but the undercurrent of the drama really leads to *śānta rasa* (the sentiment of peace). Curiously enough, "Rādhā" is interpolated for "Gopī" in a few cases, although it does not carry with it any weight of prominence, for Vaiṣṇavism in Assam is conspicuous by the absence of the Rādhā cult which is really foreign to the original religion of the Bhāgawata and Gītā.

RUKMINI HARAN NAT is another work, like *Kelī Gopāl*, the theme of which has been dwelt on more than once. The prose speeches and

all dramatic technique are fully represented here as in the other mature dramas of Śaṅkardew. The two exquisite Bhatimā (songs) describing the personal beauty of Rukmiṇī and Kṛṣṇa are quoted from it for the music and rhythm that compare with Vidyāpati. The "Bhāta" (singer) of Kuṇḍil thus describes the beauty of Rukmiṇī before Kṛṣṇa at Dwāarakā. Besides the description, it is noted also for the music of its words and verses.

Hāmāka Kundina nagari anupām.  
 Ache kanyā eka Rukmiṇī nām.  
 Bhīsmaka rājā nandini bara bālā:  
 Bār haya jini nava cāndaka kalā.  
 Ki kahaba ramanika rūpa parachur:  
 Bayanaka pekhi cānda bheli dūr.  
 Nayanaka pekhi pāi bara lāj:  
 Kayala jhampa kamala jala māj.  
 Banduli adhika adhara karu kānti.  
 Oṭima motima daśanaka pānti.  
 Suvalita bhuja yuga ratana molān:  
 Uru karikara kati damaruka thān.  
 Nava pallava ruci pada yuga śohe:  
 Pekhite sura nara muni mana mohe.  
 Bāṇi amiyā rasa guṇe nohe hīn:  
 Rāja Kumārīka bayasa nabīn.  
 Katanu yatane bidhi kaya niramān:  
 Sohi kanyā hay tohāri samān.

The Bhātas (singers) of Dwāarakā describe the personal magnetism of Kṛṣṇa to Rukmiṇī at Kuṇḍil. It is equally beautiful and is to be noted for the music of its words and verses.

Śuna śuna Rukmiṇī māi:  
 Kṛṣṇa guṇ kahan nayāi.  
 Mukha indu koti parakāś.  
 Daśana motima manda hās.  
 Nayana pankaja nava pātā:  
 Kara tala utapala rātā.  
 Madanaka dhanu bhrūva bhanga:  
 Bhuja yuga balita bhujanga:  
 Bahala bakṣa siṃha bandha:  
 Trivali balita kati kandha.  
 Uru karikara awabhāsa:  
 Mr̥ḍu pade pankaja bikāśa.  
 Nakhacaya cāndaka pānti:  
 Padatāle ārakata bhānti.  
 Dhawaja vraja ankuśa śohe:  
 Pekhiye tribhuvana mohe.  
 Abhinava taruna mūrati.  
 Ki kahaba rūpaka bibhūti:  
 Gati gambhīra mṛga rāj.  
 Kauti Madana heri lāj.

Tuhō nawa tarunī pradhān;  
 So Hari navina juwān.  
 Duho eka bayasa samān;  
 Kayali Vidhi niramān.  
 Bhuvana nirupama rūpa:  
 Śuna dhani bacana swarūpa.  
 Yawa tawa pati sohi hui:  
 Safala janama tewe tui.

Rumiñi's letter in Assamese prose, mixed with Brajabuli, to Kṛṣṇa sent through Vedanidhi is to be noted. "Swasti Sri Parameswar—sakala surāsuravandita pāda-padma prapanna janatārana Narayana Sri Sri Kṛṣṇa caraṇa sarojeṣu Rukmiṇyah sahasra prapāma—likhanm. Sivamiha nivedananca. He Swāmi, bhikshuka mukhe tava guṇa rūpa śuniye kāyabākyamane tohāka patibhāwe baraichi. Tathi pāpī Śiśupāla hāmāka bibāha karite āwala thika. Yaice simhaka bhāyā nite śṛgāla āsaya thika. Tāhe dekhiye bhaye danḍe yuga yāi. Jani hāmi nija dāsika sattvare newa āsia. Swāmi, yava bola toho antespure raha, kona parkāre bheta pāwaba, tathi upāya kahō, he nātha tā śunaha. Vivāhaka pūrva divāsa Bhavānīka mathe calaba, se samay hamaka hari niya yāwa. Yava tohō helā kari hāmāka nāhi newaba, tava tohota badha diyā hāmo prāṇa chāraba, pāpī Śiśupālak chāyā hāmo kavaho pāwe nāhi parasō. Ohi jāni nija dāsika, he nātha, uddhara. Tava caraṇa saroruhe kiṃ bahu lēkhyamiti patramidam." "To.... Kṛṣṇa.... O Lord, having heard of your qualities and beauties, I have dedicated myself to you in body, mind and word. But the vile Śiśupāl comes to marry me, as a jackal can desire a lioness.... So do come and take away your slave in me.... If you neglect, I will give up my life laying the blame at your door."

Lakṣmīnāth Bezbaruwā (*Śaṅkardew* ch. X) refers to another drama *Kaṃsa Badh* by Śaṅkardew, not extant; but there is one *Kaṃsa Badh Nāt* by Rāmcaraṇ, who may have replaced it. *Rām-Vijay* (Sītā Swayambar) appears to be the ninth and last, and the only drama of non-Kṛṣṇa or Rāmā cult written by Śaṅkardew. Probably it was written in the early sixties of the sixteenth century, and was of course written at the request of Sukladhvaj or Cilarāi by whose patronage it was staged at Kocbehar in Śaṅkardew's last days.

Rāmaka parama bhakati rasa jāna:  
 Sri Śukladhvaja nṛpati pradhāna.  
 Rāma Vijaya jo kārāwata Nāta:  
 Milahu tāheka Vaikuṇṭhaka bāta.

Evidently the theme is Rāmā's marriage with Sītā, but Śaṅkardew follows his own plan though the story is culled from the Rāmāyaṇa. He describes how Rāmā won Sītā in a *swayambara*, not found in Sanskrit, and how he paid Paraśurām back in his own coin when the latter challenged him. The drama ends in the show of mercy by Rām, an incarnation of Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa, who, though already releasing his infal-

lible arrow which he was not then in a position to withdraw, saved Paraśurām's head by directing the arrow only to block Paraśurām's way to the heaven.

Here in two beautiful *Bhatimās* are found two parallel pen pictures of Sitā and Rām, also quoted for illustration of their imageries and diction combined with music and rhythm.

Ki kahaba rūpa kumārīka Rām:  
 Kanaka putalī tula tana anupām.  
 Ratana tilaka lola alaka kapol:  
 Heriā bhrūva-bhanga tribhuvana bhol.  
 Dekhiyā badana cānda bheli lāj.  
 Nayana nirikhi kamala jala māj.  
 Heriye bhuja yuga milala ucchanka:  
 Lalita mrnāla majala jala pankā.  
 Ārakata kara tala muni mana mohā:  
 Kanak salakā ānguli karu śohā.  
 Banduli adhika adhara karu kānti:  
 Dārimba nibira bija danta pānti.  
 Iṣata hāse Madana moha yāi.  
 Nāsā tila fula kamalinī māi.  
 Nava yauvana tana badari pramāṇ:  
 Uru karikara kati dambaruka thān.  
 Pada pallava nava pankaja kānti:  
 Campaka pāpari āngulika pānti.  
 Nakhacaya cāru cānda parakās:  
 Lahu lahu matta gaja gamana bilās.  
 Katano lāvaṇye vidhi niramila jāni:  
 Kokila nāda amiyā jhure bānī.  
 Tuhu sukumārarupe noha hīna:  
 Rāja kumārīka bayasa navīna.  
 Sohi bara ramaṇi ghariṇī yava hoi.  
 Tava gṛhabāsa samfala tava hoi.

Another *Bhatimā* describes Rāma's personal magnetism. It is equally superb and both compare beautifully with the respective pen pictures of Rukmiṇī and Kṛṣṇa.

Śuna sakhi bacana svarūpa:  
 Ki kahaba Rāmaka rūpa.  
 Śyāma mūrati pīta bāsa:  
 Ghane jaice bijuri bikāsā.  
 Mastaka chatraka veśa:  
 Nīla ākuncita keśa.  
 Rucikara karṇa atula:  
 Nāsā nīla tila fula.  
 Badana indu parakās:  
 Aruna adhara manda hās.  
 Oṭima dasanaka pāti:  
 Māṇika jhikamika kānti.  
 Madanaka dhanu bhrūva bhanga:

Bhujayuga valita bhujanga.  
 Nayana pankaja nava pātā:  
 Karatāla utpala rātā.  
 Ānguli lalita amula:  
 Nakhacaya cāndaka tula.  
 Sundara udara kati bandha:  
 Śohe simha bandha kandha.  
 Uru karikara nirupama:  
 Carapa kamala keśa śyāma.  
 Padatāla rātula kānti:  
 Dhvaja java pankaja pānti.  
 Mānusara aicana rūpa:  
 Nahi śuni kahilō svarūpa.  
 Nabina bayasa sukumāra:  
 Bheli Nārāyaṇa avatāra.  
 Kino bheli bhāgya tohāri:  
 Tuhu nava tarunī kumārī.  
 Vidhi milāwala āni:  
 Teri manoratha jāni.

(d) RISE OF BARGITS (NOBLE SONGS): *Bar Gīt* (Noble Songs) at once an innovation and invention, is again a giant instrument of Vaiṣṇvite propaganda and a rare contribution to literature. Possessing curious similarity in form and technique with Buddhist songs, called Caryas, couples of centuries back, and with almost contemporary songs of Vidyāpati and Durgābar of Mithila and Assam, it still towers over them all by sheer merit of Śaṅkardew's originality. The various forms of indigenous songs long prevalent were soon surpassed by the novelty combined in the introduction of high spiritual tone with classical tunes of different scientific forms of *ragas*, and being conspicuous by the absence of *rāginīs*. Even all the songs composed by Śaṅkardew himself are not Bar Gīts; for example, the songs of his dramas do not usually belong to that class for the lack of certain essential qualities of Bar Gīts, which reformed Assamese music and poetry at the same time. The language of the Bar Gīts has usually a majesty and grandeur quite their own in keeping with both classical tunes and scriptural dignity.

Both the Bardowā prose biography and tradition say that Śaṅkardew alone composed as many as 240 Bar Gīts, and, while at Barpeta, one of his disciples named Kamala Gayan took the manuscript of these songs which incidentally burnt to ashes as his house caught fire. Śaṅkardew felt this loss seriously and asked Mādhawdew to make up this loss. Thus Mādhawdew is said to have composed 191 Bar Gīts by himself. But the number of Bar Gīts even today does not exceed 197, all told, and inclusive of 154 by Mādhawdew. They are either narrative or reflective, that is, philosophical about *dāśya bhakti*. It is not exactly known which song Śaṅkardew composed first. But in his

first pilgrimage which he commenced about 1479, he went as far as Badarikāśram where he is said to have composed the following Bar Gīt (Noble song).

Mana meri Ram caranahi lāgu: (Dhrung)  
 Tai dekhanā antaka āgu.  
 Mana, āyu kṣaṇe kṣaṇe tute:  
 Dekha, prāna kona dina chute.  
 Mana, kāla-ajagare kile:  
 Jāna, tileke maraṇa mile.  
 Mana, niścaye patana kāyā:  
 Tai, Rām bhaja tyaji māyā.  
 Re man, isava biṣaya dhāndhā:  
 Kene, dekhi nedekhasa āndhā.  
 Mana, sukhe para kaice ninda:  
 Tai citte cinta Govinda.  
 Mana, jāniā Śaṅkare kahe,  
 Dekha, Rām bine gati nahe.

'O my Mind, pin thyself to the feet of Ram. Seest thou not Death staring thee in the face? (chorus). O Mind, life is fleeting. Take care which day it flies. O Mind, the Serpent of Time is devouring, know that Death may steal in at any moment. O Mind, fall of the body is dead sure. Do therefore devote thyself to Ram and leave off this illusion. O Mind, this world is full of worries. Why thou seest it and yet seest it not like the blind? O Mind, how canst thou then sleep peacefully? Do get Govind into your heart. O Mind, Śaṅkar says this, wittingly see, there is no way out of Rām'.

The Bar Gīts of Śaṅkardew now available are about 34 in number. Here is a typical one. Rāg Asowarī.

Dhrung:—Jaya jaya Yādawa Jala nidhi jā-dhava-dhātā:  
 Śrutamātrākhila trātā:  
 Smaraṇe karay siddhi dina dayā nidhi,  
 Bhukuti mukuti pada dātā.  
 Pad:—Jaga jana jīwana Ajana-Janārdana  
 Danuja damana dukkha-hārī:  
 Mahadānanda— kanda Paramānanda  
 Nanda-nandana banacārī.  
 Vividha bihāra— biśārada śārada-  
 Indu nindi parakāśī:  
 Śeṣa śayana Śiva Keśi-bināsana  
 Pītabasana abināśī.  
 Jagata bandhu bindhu Mādhawa Madhuripu  
 Madhura mūruti Murañāśī:  
 Keśawa-carana— Saroruha kinkara  
 Śaṅkara ehu abhilāśī.

'Glory to Kṛṣṇa of the Yadu line. Glory to Lakshmi's master who maintains this world and is the deliverer of all the Vedas (in the first incarnation), and who is the sea of mercy, as it were, to the poor, and who is the giver of the best salvation to His devotees and whose



remembrance alone may be the cause of accomplishments of all efforts. (Refrain). (Thou art) the life of all the people of the world, and Thou of no woman born, Thou the controller of all demons and the destroyer of sorrows. (Thou art) the joy of the great and the spring of Infinite Bliss, and Thou (appearing as) the son of Nanda and Thou well-versed in various divine sports, and the lustre of whose body holds the glitter of the moon of the autumn in contempt; and Thou who hast rested on the great Serpent, promoting welfare of all, who didst kill such demons as Keśi, Thou who wearest the yellow robe and who alone art imperishable. (Thou art) the friend of the world but the enemy of the demons, thou the master of Lakshmī and the foe of the demon named Madhu, Thou of such a fine appearance, but the killer of the demon Mura: Thy slave Śaṅkar aspires alone after the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa.'

Like the *rāgas* which are so much varied, suited to different sentiments, to be sung in different parts of the day, narrations and descriptions also vary in colour showing Śaṅkardew's mastery over words. The following *Bar-Gīt* describing the expedition of Rāmā's army against Rāvana, with the plea to extol adoration of Rāmā, has superb choice of words for an onomatopoeic poem which may be noted, apart from the word-pictures and meanings of words.

*Rāg—Aśowārī*

*Dhruṃ*: Śuna, śuna, re sura bari pramāṇā  
                     niśācara nāśa nidānā:  
 Rāma-nāma yama                      samaraka sāji  
                     Samadale kayali payānā.  
 Pad: Thāṭa prakāṭa paṭu Koṭi koṭi kapi  
                     Giri gara gara pada ghāwe:  
 Bāridhi tari tari                      Kare gurutara giri-  
                     Dhari dhari samaraka dhāwe.  
 Hāṭa ghāṭa vahu                      bāṭa biyāpi  
                     Caugarhe berhali Lankā:  
 Guru ghana ghana ghoṣa              ghariṣaṇa garjana,  
                     Śrawaṇe janamaya śaṅkā.  
 Dhira dhira śura-                      śekhara Rāghava,  
                     Rāvana, tuwā pari jhāmpe:  
 Śura nara kinnara                      phanadhara thara thara  
                     Mahīdhara tarasi prakampe.  
 Andha mugudha daśa                  Kandha pāpa budha  
                     Jānakī śirata carāi:  
 Raghupati pada bara                  dhara rajani-cara,  
                     Śaṅkara kahatu upāi.

Here the sense of the rough fight has been made to echo by selected words of choice harsh consonants mostly cerebrals as "thāṭa prakāṭa paṭu koṭi koṭi", "hāṭa ghāṭa, bāṭa" and so forth, and other harsh consonants and compounds as in "dhari dhari" "ghāwe" "dhāwe" "andha",

'mugudha', 'kandha', as also series of onomatopoetic and other alliterative words, as in the illustrated four lines:

"Hāṭa ghāṭa vahu      bāṭa biyāpi      \*  
    Caugaḍe berhala Lankā:  
 Guru ghana ghana ghoṣa      ghariṣaṇa garjana  
    Sravane jānamaya śaṅkā."

**SANKARDEW'S ORIGINALITY IN PHILOSOPHY AND LITERATURE:** It may be customary for a class of critics to be on the look-out for a prototype of Śaṅkardew among the Ācāryas for his philosophy of Vaiṣṇavism, and for similar prototype among the earlier playwrights elsewhere for his inventions of first Assamese plays and performances, as though it were like pouring of the contents of one bottle into another. Personal genius like the genius of a nation is anything but imitative and apish. Whatever the seed, the peculiar soil that nourishes and nurtures it to germinate, to grow and to bear fruits that we enjoy, is surely by far the more important factor. Sometimes they would find Śaṅkarācārya's monism to be the model of Śaṅkardew's philosophy, and discover Rāmānuja's qualified monism at other times as his sample. This proves that it was neither this nor that, and Śaṅkardew's philosophy was his own, to be searched among his vast literature which is here.

In the anxiety to lay their erudition under contribution in quest of a prototype of Śaṅkardew as a playwright, they would even produce Umāpati of Mithila, without caring to notice the fact that Umāpati was junior to Śaṅkardew by about two hundred years, and even if no exact prototype could be found for the performance of his play, *Cihna Yātrā* in 1568, they would at least hazard a suggestion that it possibly took place after his return from the pilgrimage in which he may be suspected of seeing something somehow somewhere at sometime, although the suspicion cannot be located. They fail to see that some originality or creative genius there must be for even a model to start with, and that even borrowing needs be properly integrated and acclimatized by a genius of the soil for a social institution to stand and thrive over five hundred years. Scholarship may be more effective in a study of the actual growth of these plays and performances as detailed by the biographers so true to life, and the plays are there with their plans, technique, dramatic values in actions and usages, proportions of dialogues in early Assamese prose mixed with Maithili, and the beautiful lyrics and songs, better than wild guesses and surmises.

The early Assamese drama, like the rest of the Vaiṣṇavite literature, mainly struck the note of propaganda of Vaiṣṇavism, and the playwrights were essentially all preachers. It was principally a tact-

ful device to propagate his new faith that Śaṅkardew attempted through spectacular appeal. He already did much to present his message through the people's ears, and now he would do it through their eyes. The village *Nāmghars* (prayer-houses) and the *Satras* (monasteries) fostered this movement to the extent that it had been considered a necessary qualification for a *Satrādhikār* to be able to compose a drama. The *Bhāwanā* (theatrical play) is popular in Asam till today and may be performed in any religious or social function. The *Āhom* kings are said to have invited any honoured guest of their courts to such a play as a mark of respect. The secularisation of the drama and its liberation for the purpose of recreation began in this manner. As a matter of fact, it is one of the most popular social institutions of Assam. The use of *Vrajabuli* lends an archaic charm of diction both in the songs and dialogues and also has a religious sanctity for the average people for the belief that it is a language of *Vrajadhām*, the land of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. *Nāts* are really romantic dramas with an excess of lyrical note; but their constructions may be comparatively loose having been meant rather to be heard than to be read.

**SANKARDEW'S PLACE IN LITERATURE:** It is sometimes argued that a large majority of Śaṅkardew's work are adaptations from Sanskrit works like the *Bhāgawat*, and so, not much proof of his gift of original or creative imagination is laid under contribution. Exactly the same charge is levelled against Chaucer; and Emerson's excellent comment on it may serve as a common reply: "A great poet, who appears in illiterate times, absorbs into his sphere all the light which is anywhere radiating. Every intellectual jewel, every flower of sentiment, it is his fine office to bring to his people, and he comes to value his memory equally with his invention. He is therefore, little solicitous whence his thoughts have been derived; whether through translation, whether through tradition, whether by travel in distant countries, whether by inspiration; from whatever sources, they are equally welcome to his uncritical audience." The supreme question after all is not where the tap-root of genius draws its nourishment, but what is the culminating expression of that nourishment? What blossom is forthcoming? Genius has an alchemy of its own that can transmute the metals, it may steal on occasion, into pure gold. And all that Śaṅkardew has left in his writings is "pure gold", few can deny.

In a way, history of Assamese culture is just a little more than an extended biography of Śaṅkardew, as Assamese literature itself is just a little more than an extended literature of Śaṅkardew. Śaṅkardew's position in the history of Asam Vaiṣṇavism or in the general culture and literature of Assam is so self-evident that one can hardly

do better than reiterate the metaphor that Śaṅkardew is the Phoebus in the cultural and literary horizon of Asam, his predecessors like Mādhaw Kandali being comparable only to the Morning Star suggesting the dawn which was not far behind. Even in his own day and later, he is the great soul of the solar system that was composed with the Vaiṣṇavite luminaries revolving round and round with Śaṅkardew himself at the centre. Such stars, like Dāk, shedding lustre from beyond this solar system are indeed few and far between. Pre-Śaṅkarite poets like Mādhaw Kandali, Hem Saraswati and others are shining today with lustre added to them by Śaṅkardew. Just two centuries following the birth of Śaṅkardew is taken for the Vaiṣṇavite period, mainly for convention and convenience; but even till today the rays of the Vaiṣṇavite luminaries linger, and the poets still dearest to the hearts of the mass people are no other than Śaṅkardew and his followers. Even in the twenties of the present century poems had been composed in imitation of Śaṅkarite models. Thus the position of Śaṅkardew in Assamese literature is too unique and self-evident to need any comment.

## V. THE SOLAR SYSTEM OF RENASCENCE WRITERS

**MADHAWADEW'S CONTRIBUTION. EARLIER WORKS:** Cilārāi requested Śaṅkardew to compose a work, *Janma Rahasya* (Mystery of Birth) at Koc Behār. Śaṅkardew said he would do it at Barpetā; but when he came to Barpetā he asked Mādhawdew to do the work for him. Mādhawdew at first hesitated, perhaps because he was then a novice; but when he did it at last, incorporating the ideas of the Bhāgawat, it was much appreciated by Cilārāi. (Daityāri, vs. 865-71). Curiously enough, not only is this work not extant, but it finds no place in the list of his works. And one *Janma Rahasya* with the colophon of Sucandra Bhārati is extant.

Janma Rahasya śuni pātak erāi:  
 Brahma lok erai sito Viṣṇu loke jāi.  
 Bhavishyat Purānar kathā ehi guti:  
 Janma Rahasyar kathā bhailā samāpati.  
 Sucandra Bhārati kahe ati alpa mati:  
 Janame janame hauk Kṛṣṇat bhakati.  
 Sucandra Bhārati kahe śunā sarvalok:  
 Dāki Rām Rām bolā pātak chārok.

It is also curious that a work like *Vaiṣṇava Kīrttan* should be in the list of Mādhawdew's works (D.C.A.M., p. 18) which he never wrote.

Mādhawdew's *Ādi Kāṇḍa Rāmāyaṇa*, is elsewhere mentioned. Its mode of writing suggests that Mādhawdew was still a probationer in

the literary skill, but it shows all the same, the great promise of a genius. The poet's power of observation as also his appreciation of psychological situations and pathos were proved undoubted, as shown, for instance, in describing Kaikeyi. Mādhawdew's description of the lament of Janaka's wife when Sītā was to go to her father-in-law's house is touching and suggests a portrait of any Assamese family on such occasions.

The original Sanskrit work of *Nām Mālīkā* was compiled by Rājā Puruṣottam Gajapati of Orissa who is also connected with the original works *Dīpikā Candra* and *Rudra Yāmal*. Mādhawdew clears at the beginning how by the advice of Bīru Kārji he wrote this work and how Puruṣottam compiled it with the help of scholars (vs. 5-10 ff). The subject of *Nām-Mālīkā* is of course the glorification of the name of God as described in different scriptures and like the *Bṛhat Ajāmil Upākhyān*, *Nām-Mālīkā* declares the name of God as the panacea for all evils (vs. 219-387). In the concluding chapter again Mādhawdew recalls his friend Bīru Kārji and king Lakṣmī Nārāyaṇ once more (vs. 585-91). Another work, *Rājusūya Yajna* was written by Mādhawdew on the theme how a great sacrifice was performed after Jarāsandha's body was torn asunder by Bhīma in a duel and his son Sahadew was put on the throne. Jarāsandha was an enemy of Kṛṣṇa and he imprisoned all the kings of India who did not join him against Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa led the expedition to release these kings by overthrowing Jarāsandha.

BHAKTI-RATNAWALĪ is an outstanding work, rendered from Sanskrit as already noted. It is divided into thirteen Biracans or chapters. The first deals with the Bhāgawatī cult of Love and begins with Mādhawdew's own Prologue. The second and third chapters deal with the utility of noble company and analysis of Love respectively. Next nine chapters deal with the nine forms of Bhakti, and the last chapter dwells on the initiation ceremony (Śaraṇ) and is completed in more than 1600 verses. Śaṅkardew appears to have asked Mādhawdew to render it into Assamese immediately before his last departure for Koc Behār. (Rāmānanda, vs. 1459-16). He left all his instructions with Mādhawdew and among other things asked him to write out the *Nām-Ghoṣā* and *Bhakti Ratnāwalī* presently. He had already advised to translate the *Ratnāwalī* and now he instructs him about the *Nām-Ghoṣā* in details (vs. 1611-14).

NAM GHOSA appears to be the last work of Mādhawdew, written about 1568-1596. It is said that Śaṅkardew asked Mādhawdew to write a work that would be sweet as the plum but hard as the seed within it.



'The joy that the name of Hari produces illumined heaven. The nectar of Love, like a river whose bunds have been cut away by Śrī Śaṅkardew, flows down and pervades the whole universe.'

Śrī manta Śaṅkar                      Hari bhakatar  
Jānā yena kalpataru:  
Tāhānta bināi                      nāi nāi nāi  
Amār param Guru. 375.

'Know ye that Śrī Śaṅkardew is like the wish-yielding tree of all the devotees of Hari. Be triple sure that there is no Guru other than Śaṅkardew himself.'

Secondly, he hankers after "Love, which is so full of joy". This is either in shape of Bhakti or Nām.

Avyakta Īśwara Hari,                      kimate pūjibā tānka  
Vyāpakata kibā visarjana:  
Etāwanta mūrtisūnya,                      kenamate cintibāhā,  
Rām buli śuddha karā man. 5.

'God is not expressed (in any form); how can you worship Him? He is all-pervading; how can you denounce Him? He is devoid of form; how can you meditate Him? So simply utter His name and purify your hearts.'

Caitnya āditya,                      hṛday ākāśe,  
Sarvadāye prakāśay:  
Udayāsta nāi,                      Sandhyā upāsanā,  
Karibā kona samay. 390.

'The pheobus of consciousness illumines the firmament of the heart, by day and at night. It knows no rising or setting. Where is the time for worship?'

Sakala Nigama latā                      tār avināśi fal  
Kṛṣṇa Nām caitanya svarūp:  
Sumadhur sumangal,                      śraddhāye helāye laiā  
Nara mātra tare bhawa kūp. 8.

'All the Vedas are creepers. Their indestructible fruit is the name of Kṛṣṇa which is ever-living, sweet and promoting all welfare. Man can easily deliver himself from the deep pit of this world by reciting His name with respect.'

Third and last, is surrender at the feet of God (Yadupati).

He Kṛṣṇa tumi mātra,                      caitanya svarūpa nitya,  
Satya śuddha jñāna akhaṇḍita:  
Āwar yateka ito,                      tomār vinoda rūpa,  
Carācar māyāre kalpita. 73.

'O Kṛṣṇa, Thou alone art living, eternal, true, and pure and perfect knowledge; all besides Thee are merely illusory.'

Harir gṛhar dvāre                      vetrar prahār yogya  
Brahmā Indra ādi dewa-jhak. 104.

'Brahmā, Indra and other gods deserve to be whipped when they come to the gate of God (for being worshipped).'

Nohō jānā āmi cāri jāti, cārio āśramī nohō āti  
 Nohō dharmāṣil dān brat tīrthagāmī:  
 Kintu purpānanda sanudrara, Gopī-bharttā pada kamalar,  
 Dāsarō dāsara tāna dāsa bhailō āmi. 669.

'We are not divided into four castes; (Brāhman, Kṣatriya, Vaiṣya and Sudra); we do not belong to the four different stages (student, household, ascetic and mendicant); we are not candidates for virtues by giving ourselves to gifts, fasting and pilgrimage; but we are slaves of slaves and thrice slaves at the lotus feet of the Master of the milk-maids in the sea of perfect joy.'

LITERARY AND RELIGIOUS MASTERPIECE: Like the snow-capped mountains that soon convert themselves to glaciers or ice-rivers at the advent of springtime, the hard philosophical truths of Vaiṣṇavism have melted here into exquisite poetry.

Ātmā Īśwarak lāg, pratyakṣe satate pāi,  
 Nāpāi jānā tānka avidyāt:  
 Avidyā nāṣile lāg, Kṛṣṇak pāway yen  
 Kaṇthalagna bastuk sāksāt. 41.

'You can always meet Soul or God personally, but not when you are enveloped in illusion. When illusion is removed, you will find Kṛṣṇa personally as you do a necklace attached to your neck.'

Antarata eka Īśwarak dekhioka nānā bāhirata,  
 Antarata bodh bāhirat jara prāi:  
 Buddhita samaste tejioka, bāhirat sang dekhāyoka,  
 Ehibhāve Rām lokata furā berāi. 595.

'One God alone resides at heart. Find Him as many in the outside. Know Him as living in heart, but as inanimate in the outer world. Feel yourself detached by intellect, but show yourself attached to them to outer view. Do walk about in the society like this.'

A large portion of the couplets are nice renderings from verses of the Gītā, Bhāgawat and other scriptures, showing mastery of Mādhawdew also over Sanskrit literature. Far from being mere translations, these verses too are woven into the Nām-Ghoṣā in a manner which makes them his own. The thousand and one verses are written in a large variety of metres and tunes, all sparkling and dancing with the glow of a saint's deep spiritual experience and pregnant with the celestial fire.

Hari nāme yata pāp saṁhariba pāre:  
 Tateka pātākī pāp kariba nāpāre. 509.

'No sinner can commit so many sins as the name of Hari can destroy.'

Āpon nāmar sang nachāranta Hari:  
 Yeī nam sei Hari jānā niṣṭha kari. 514.



'God does not part company with His own name. Know ye for certain that wherever His name is there God is also.'

Nām dhan diā more kinā Vanamāli:  
Dās pāi nalawā kamana thākurali. 540.  
Nij dās kari Hari mok kinā kinā:  
Ān dhan nalāgay nām-dhan binā. 541.

'O God, do purchase me with the money that is Nām.' What Master will not buy a slave who offers himself? O purchase me, do purchase, making me your slave. I need no money save the money that is Nām'. So intoxicated was he with Nām that by his verses he could not but offer them to every mouth with keen enthusiasm:

"Piyu piyu amiyā mādhuri Hari nām, Rām Rām". 704.  
'Drink, drink, drink, the nectar of so sweet a thing as God's name.'

Like Kālidās's *Meghadūt* which was instantly imitated by a large number of his contemporary second-class poets giving rise to a class of poetry which might be named *Dūta-kāvya* or *Sandēs-Kāvya*, the *Nām-Ghoṣā* was also imitated by many of his contemporary poets as Gopāl Miśra who wrote *Ghoṣā-Ratna*, Puruṣottam Thākur who wrote *Na-Ghoṣā*. But they were short-lived, as they must have been lacking the vitality of Mādhawdew's genius. So in every way, *Nām-Ghoṣā* is a great Assamese masterpiece of literature and religion. To conclude with one beautiful prayer of *Nām-Ghoṣā*:

Kimate Bhakati karibō tomāt Hari e:  
Mai mūrhamati nājāno tāra upāy, Rāma Rām.  
Mahā valawanta durbāṣana ghora, Hari e:  
Āmār manak tyajīā dūrā nājāi, Rāma Rām. 790.  
Tomār māyāye mana mohi āche, Hari. e:  
Ajnān āndhāre pariā pāra nāpāo, Rāma Rām.  
Abhay caraṇe saraṇ paśilō, Hari e,  
Tuā guṇa nām bhakati pradīpa cāō, Rāma Rām. 791.

'O, how shall I be devoted to you? I am dull of intellect and can find no means out. Very powerful and dreadful are the evil dsires; they do not shake my mind off: Illusions you are spreading over my mind; so I am in the gloom of ignorance of which I see no end. I seek shelter at your feet that give safety; and I look for the lamp of devotion which thy glories and attributes illumine'.

From *Daityāri* we learn too that he compiled the various poems of the *Nām-Ghoṣā* while at Koc Behār after compiling the *Nām-Mālikā*:

Āchanta ānandamane, Behārat katodine,  
Mādhawdewar bhailā man:  
Āul bhāngi Ghoṣā khān, karō āni ek thān,  
Ehi buli saraṇ bhajan. 1513.  
Nindā Tuti upadeś, prārthanā kākuti khed,  
Bahu bidh patal karilā: 1514.

**SPURIOUS WORKS:** *Guptamani* contains no colophon either of Mādhawdew or of Śaṅkardew. The only colophon that may suggest anything or nothing is: "Kahe Govindar dās erā ān kam." Both thought and style, and language clearly betray that it cannot be rightly attributed to any of the great Vaiṣṇava writers, far less to Mādhawdew or Śaṅkardew. *Amūlya Ratna* another spurious work attributed to Mādhawdew concludes with such lines as—

Janma cintāmaṇi,	satvare nāpāi,
Teji lobh krodh kām:	
Śaṅkar Mādhaw,	prāṇar bāndhaw,
Dāki bola Rāma Rām.	
Racilā Mādhawe	śunā nirantare,
Amulya Ratana sār:	
Śaṅkar Mādhawe,	mahā śuddha bhāwe
Racilā ito payār.	

This method of joint authorship also betrays that it is not genuine. Queer interpretations of the name of Śaṅkardew and loose style of writing make the conclusion irresistible that it is spurious.

**CORDHARA NAT:** Daityāri states that when Mādhawdew and his disciples were persecuted by king Raghudew (v. 1276), he asked Mathurādās to take him to Barpetā which the latter did (vs. 1285-86). There Mādhawdew lived happily for some time and wrote several dramas and got them staged to the great satisfaction of the people of Tāntikuci, Barpetā (vs. 1286-88).

*Cordharā* (Thief-capture) appears as one of Mādhawdew's earliest plays. The contents of this play is that Kṛṣṇa was caught red-handed while stealing butter from a milk-maid's house, but they caught him a Tartar.... When child Kṛṣṇa found himself caught, he managed to get the milk-maids who now gathered, to the public road, and immediately called his friends, the cowherds, to witness how he being found alone was defamed as a thief. It being now difficult to prove the culprit, the milk-maids would fain release Kṛṣṇa; but Kṛṣṇa said he would not release the milk-maids who were the real thieves according to him. A compromise was however reached at last by which child Kṛṣṇa was to dance and the milk-maids were to supply butter to the cowherd boys. In the meantime came Yasōdā in quest of her son, weeping and asking passers-by, proudly describing the charming appearance of Kṛṣṇa—"Ahe pathika, hāmāri bālaka aichana rūpa, bhantā kheri khelāite śra-majale badana pankaja śobhā karaiche, kubalaya dala jiniye śyāma śārīra prakāś karaiche, pekhite parama ānanda milata."

'O traveller, my child is the one, the lotus of whose face is sparkling with perspiration due to playing all along, and, it does the eyes good to see, whose body is outshining everything beautiful.'

The passers-by failing, Yasōdā was accosted by one woman, who was told—"He māi goāri, toho hāmu abhāginīta ki puchata? Hāmu aneka puṇya kariye dewatāka bare Kṛṣṇaka putra pāwalō. Se prāṇa

putra Kṛṣṇa kheri khelāite bihane bajāwala, biala bhāi gaila, ekhano nāhi pāwala. Se prāṇa putraka bicāri nāpāi hāmāri prāṇ kaiche rahaba."

O milk-maid, what dost thou enquire of this unfortunate woman? I happened to get Kṛṣṇa as my son by acquiring enough merit. Such my son has gone out to play early in the morning and has not turned up till this late hour in afternoon. How can I sustain my life without Kṛṣṇa?"

This woman took her to the spot, relating all that had happened. Yasōdā after taking the milk-maids to task for defaming her good son, removed the dust from off his body, kissed him and carried him home in her lap. Even her chastisement of the milk-maids, full of the warmth of love of child Kṛṣṇa, is beautiful.

"Āhe dhāndi goārīsava, dāsika dāsī, tohā sava hāmāra ohi bālaka Śrī Kṛṣṇaka cor buliye kalanka karaichi. Chih, tora savaka mukhe chara paroka. He Bāpu Kṛṣṇa, ohi bāndīsavaka thāwe āwara nāhi āwabi. Hāmāra ghare dadhi dugdha lawanu ke puchata? Yata khāite pāra, tata hāmu dewaba. Tohāri pāwar bālāi laō. Āhe Bāpu, toho hāmār koti puruṣaka dewako dewatā, mātḥaka mukuṭa, galaka sātasari, bukura śītala candana."

'Ye base milk-maids, slaves of slaves! Do you dare bring disgrace on this my son Śrī Kṛṣṇa, calling him a thief? Fie on you! Be your mouths covered with ashes. O dearest Kṛṣṇa, do never come to these slave-women. Who cares for curd, milk and butter in my house? I shall give you as much as you desire. I take the dusts off your feet. O dearest one, you are the god of gods of crores of generations before me. You are the crown of my head, the valued chain of my neck, the coolest *candan* of my heart.'

The theme of this play is not found in the Bhāgawata or elsewhere. It is Mādhawdew's own. But it might be suggested by the following Vilvamangal stotra.

Kandukrirhā bigalita dhanasveda mugdhānanaśrīh:  
Kāscitdantah kuvalayadalaśyāmalah ko'pi vālah.  
Prachantyeva pathi pathi yayan vyākulā Nanda-patnī:  
Tire tire tapana dahitah Kṛṣṇamanveśanto.

PIMPARA GUCOWA NAT: Mādhawdew's second drama is styled as *Pimparā Gucuā* (Removing Ants). This drama also begins with child Kṛṣṇa once more caught red-handed while putting his hand in a pot full with butter, in another milk-maid's house. On being cross-examined, child Kṛṣṇa takes the plea of removing ants from within the pot of butter whence the name *Pimparā Gucuā Nāt*. The dialogues all in Assamese prose mixed with *Vrajabuli* are neat and brief:

"Gopī—'Āhe bālaka, hāmāra mandire tuhū ke?' Kṛṣṇa—'Ah, hāmāka nāhi cinaha! Hāmu Bālāika Kaniṣṭha bhāi.' Gopī—'Ah, jānalo, jānalo. Ki nimitte ethā āwali thika?' Kṛṣṇa—'Hāmāra māndira buli āwalō,

pantha bichoralō'. Gopī—'He Kṛṣṇa, tuhū ghar nāhi jāni āwala, ihāta kona dosa nāhi. Hamara lawanu kalasa bhitare kaicana hasta nibesiye thika?' Kṛṣṇa—'Āh, hāmāka bara doṣa pāwala. Ohi pipilikā sava lavanu nāsa karala; ihāka dūra karite hāta diā āchi.' Gopī—'He Kānāi, tuhū bara nāgara, hāmāka sakala lavanu khai jhunthā bāta kahaicha. Yava tuhū lavanu nāhi khāwala, tava bacana bulite tohāri badāna hante kaichana lavanuka gandha bājha hui?' Kṛṣṇa—'He goāri, tuhū bari dāruṇa hṛdaya. Āpuna jīhbā rākhiṭe napāri āpona grhe lavanu khāwali. Āve bhataraka bhaye hāmāka apayaśa dewas. Hāmāra ghare lawanu ke puchata, khāibāke napāi tomāri ghare cura kaye lawanu khāwalō?'

"Milk-maid—'O boy, whoever thou art in my house? Kṛṣṇa—'Well, do you not know me? I am the younger brother of Balarām.' Milk-maid—'I see, I see. But what brings you here, really?' Kṛṣṇa—'I have mistaken it for my house. I have lost the way.' Milk-maid—'Well Kṛṣṇa, you have come mistaking the house, it is not to be blamed for. But what made you put your hand inside the butter pot, to be sure? Kṛṣṇa—'Is it a great guilt? These ants are spoiling all the butter, and just to remove them I put my hand in it.' Milk-maid—'O Kānāi, you are too cunning. You have eaten my butter, and you lie as I enquire. If you have not eaten my butter, how does the smell of butter comes out as you speak?' Kṛṣṇa—'Well, milk-maid, you are very cruel-hearted. You have eaten butter in your own house failing to control your own tongue. Now for fear of your husband, you put the blame at my door. Who cares for butter in my house? Do I come to steal butter in your house there being nothing in my house?'

The milk-maids have now been put to shame being charged of theft of butter by themselves. They appealed to Yaśōda who this time chastised Kṛṣṇa. The drama ends with a retort to Yaśōdā by Kṛṣṇa who said:

"He Māyi, tuhū bistara nāhi bolaba. Hāmu tohāri bhartcanā sahāba nāhi....Tohāri bhāva dekhi sava loke jānala tuhū yaichana bara mānuṣar jhā. Oh, he Māi, tuhū janama ānṭhu kari rahaye thika. Hāmu putra huyā se doṣa dūra kayalō. Āva hāmāka āge cāturi lagāwa. Āh, ki dāruṇa hṛdaya! Āpuna putrata dayā nāhi jānata. Jagata dhākiye lavanu cora nāma delaha. Āra apamāna sahite napāri palāwaba. Tohāri bhāvana cūra karaba. Hāmāka napāi pache kāndi maraba.'

'Oh mother, enough of it, chastise me no more. I am not going to put up with your rebukes farther....Seeing your vanity, all people may think you to be a high-born lady. Alas, O mother, had you not been on your knees for your whole life? It is I who removed that curse (of barrenhood) by being born to you as your son. Alas! what a cruel heart! You know no affection even for your own son. You have covered the world defaming me as a thief of butter. What else remains to be done? It is beyond me to tolerate further insults; so I should fly away from you. I should explode your vanity. You will die weeping for me as I leave you.'

Like its predecessor, the theme of this play is also original, not found in the Bhāgavatā or elsewhere, and probably suggested by two other verses of *Vilwamangal stotra*, also appearing in Sridhar Swami's *Vraja-Bihār Kavya* (*Ankāvali*, pp. xciii):

"Kastvaṃ vāla Balānujastvamiha kiṃ manmandirāśankabā  
 Buduṃ tat navanīta kumbha vivre hastaṃ kimarthaṃ nyasa:  
 Kartuṃ tatra pipilikā panayanam suptāḥ kimudrodhitāḥ  
 Vālābatsa gatim vivektamiti samjalpan Hariḥ pātu vah.  
 Dadane navanīta gandhavāhaṃ vacane taskara cāturidhurinam  
 Nayane kuhakāścunāscito yatcaraṇe komalatandavam  
 Kumāram.

**BHUMI LOTOWA NAT:** A third drama of Mādhawdew is *Bhūmi Lotowā* (rolling on the ground) in which child Kṛṣṇa is described as weeping while one day he was about to be seen stealing butter, just to conceal the fact, and complaining that some one stole his butter, and his flute. Yaśōdā, not understanding the trick played on her, pacified him by many assurances and entreaties,—

"Ahe puta Śrī Kṛṣṇa, tohāri pāota lāgō. Aruṇa adharaka bālāi laō.  
 Ohi śyāma śarīraka avasthā dekhiye kaiche mariye najāo. Tohāri  
 aicana apamān pekhiye kamana hṛdi sahayē nāhi. Ahe Bāpu, roṣa tejaha,  
 uthaha, uthaha."

'O my son, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, I take you by your feet. I promise by your lips looking as the rising sun. Why do I not die seeing this wretched state of the beautiful body (besmeared now with dusts). My heart cannot bear to see you thus humiliated. O my dearest one, give up your wrath. Do get up.'

The theme of this play also is Mādhawadew's own, and was probably suggested by the following *Vilva Mangal stotra*:

Nītaṃ nava na kena ca pītaṃ yah kva me murali:  
 Iti samudirya luṭhantaṃ bhūman vālaṃ namāmi  
 Vāla Gopālam.

**BHOJAN VIHAR NAT** (Picnic) describes how child Kṛṣṇa and his companions were one day enjoying a picnic on the bank of the Yamuna and how Brahmā in order to test child Kṛṣṇa, stole away the cows and cowherds, which was later detected by Kṛṣṇa. The theme of this play is from Bhāgavat X adapted by Mādhawdew to suit his purpose.

The dramatic art here is much more developed with more action than in Mādhawdew's earlier dramas where the lyricism and the *bāt-salya rasa* (filial sentiment) predominate.

**ARJUN BHANJAN OR DADHI MATHAN NAT:** It describes how the two sons of Kuver, Nalkuver and Manigriva, who were cursed by Nārada to be re-born as two Arjuna trees, were now released by child

Kṛṣṇa as 'previously promised, by blowing them down with a mortar that was tied to his waist by Yaśodā. The drama opens with the fact of Yaśodā herself churning the milk appointing the maid-servants in other duties. The main plot here is received from the Bhāgawat X and Harivaṃśa. But Mādhawdew incorporates further incidents into it, again from Vilva Mangal Stotras:

Ghoṣasya moṣāpanayāya mithoguṇena:  
Madhye vavandham janani navanīta cauram....  
Nakṣatra mitra navanītakāṇā vakīṇam:  
Bakṣasthalodaramago-caramāgamānām....  
Paramīmanupadeśādhvu yadhvaṃ nigā:  
mabaneṣu nitānta cārakhīntāh....

**SUSPECTED DRAMAS:** The sixth drama attributed to Mādhawdew is *Rās Jhumurā*. It does not deal with the Rāsa Kīrīhā proper, but dwells on a side-issue of it. *Keli Gopāl* and *Rās- Jhumrā* are the first works where a distinct character as Rādhā appears, leading them to be suspected as interpolated and spurious. There is no denying the fact that Mādhawdew composed one *Jhumurā* as described by Daityāri, but whether this is the work referred to or it is used as a generic name for a kind of plays is the point. The seventh drama attributed to him is *Kotorā Khelā*, describing how one day the milk-maids led by Rādhā to 'sell' milk, curd and butter, met with Kṛṣṇa and other cowherds who interfered. A compromise was however soon effected by which Kṛṣṇa and other cowherds were to dance and the milk-maids were to supply them with milk, curd and butter. This is also considered to be spurious. The eighth drama attributed to Mādhawdew is *Bhūsan Herowā*, where again a character as Rādhā, prominent among milk-maids, appears. It begins with the story how one day Rādhā on her way to fetch water found Kṛṣṇa sleeping under a Kadamba tree and took away all his ornaments stealthily. Like its two predecessors this drama also lacks Mādhawdew's serenity of style whence the authorship of all these works is doubtful. The ninth play is *Brāhmā-Mohan* written as a complementary work to *Bhojan Vihār*. It even does not contain Mādhawdew's colophon.

**BARGITS:** The largest number of *Bar Gīts* now found belong to Mādhawdew, being fixed at 154, all told. A life-long celibate, Mādhawdew generally preferred to write about the child Kṛṣṇa in song or epic, play or poetry, and also wrote about the childhood of Rām in the *Ādi Kāṇḍa*. Mādhawdew was himself an excellent singer and his sweet voice for singing was proverbial, as recorded by Rāmcarāṇ.

Amṛtar sur yen Mādhāwar bāṇī:  
Karila praśamsā Sanyāsiye mane jāni: 3270,

One of the most typical Bar Gīts of Mādhawdew is the one usually sung before day-break in almost every Assamese family.

Rāg—Śyām

Tejare Kamalāpati parabhāte ninda:  
Teri cānda mukha pekhō uthare Govinda. (Dhrung)  
Rajani bidūra diśa dhavalī varāṇa;  
Timira fāriā bājha rabira kirāṇa.  
Satapatra bikaśita bhramara urāi:  
Vrajabadhu dadhi mathe tuā guṇa gāi.  
Dāma Sudāma dāke teri laiā nām:  
Hera dekha uthiā āsila Balarām.  
Nanda gela bāthāne goāla gela pāl.  
Surabhi cārite lāge uthare Gopāl.  
Kśīra lavanu laiā śingā beta veṇu:  
Sakāle melio batsa hāmbālāwe dhenu.  
Kahaya Mādhawa māi kino tapasāilā:  
Trijagata pati Hari rākhawāla pāilā.

'It is morning, O Kṛṣṇa, leave off your sleep. Get up, O Govinda, and let me see your shining face (chorus). The night is off, and the (ten) directions assume the white hue. The rays of the sun penetrate the darkness (of night). The lotuses are blossoming (and) the black bees are flying (round). Women of Vraja are churning milk by singing your glories. Dām and Sudām are calling you by name. So there comes Balorām to you. Nanda has left for where the cows are being milked (and) milkmen are driving their team. Rise up, O Kṛṣṇa, to keep your cows. Take cream, butter horn and flute; and untie the calves, for the cows are lowing. Mādhaw (dew) says, O mother (Yaśodā), what merits must you have acquired that you have got the Lord of the three worlds to keep your cows.'

Another beautiful Sanskrit song by Mādhawdew is as follows:

Rāg—Ahir

Govinda cintahu Bāla Gopālam:  
Ratana talapa maha, śayane rahatu Hari,  
Pankaja nayana biśālam. (Dhrung)  
Kara pankaja yuge dhari pada pankaja  
Bayana pankaje nibeśitam:  
Munibara kaicana chori amiyā  
Madhu pada pankaja rasa pitam.  
Ohi mane bhābi parama rati kautuke  
Nija pada pankaja pānam:  
Bālaka keli amiyā rasa sāgara  
Mādhawa kaha paramāṇam.

'Think of Govinda as child Gopāla. Hari (as child Kṛṣṇa) lies asleep on a cot of gems with his lotus eyes vast (chorus). (He) holds his lotus feet with his lotus hands and gets them into his lotus mouth. 'How do the sages drink the sweet juice of the lotus feet in preference

to nectar?' Thinking this in mind, he drinks (the sweet juice of) his own lotus feet in all love and zest. The child sports (of Kṛṣṇa) are a sea of nectarine juice. Mādhaw(dew) cites proof.'

Mādhawdew composed one serio-comic song about old age, encouraging every aged person to sing the glories of God, now or never:

Rāg—Bhātīālī

Burhā bhāi Hari guṇa gāiā nācā:  
 Kona dinā dhali śārīra paraya,  
 Āra ki bāta cāi āchā. (Dhrung)  
 Āyu dile bhāthi hāte lailā lāthi  
 Hānthite nacale pāw:  
 Bhāgila māṇḍali āga gaila dhali  
 Dhanu fānda dile gāw.  
 Chāl sotāsot hāḍa gotāgot  
 Kotare lukāila ākhi:  
 Tej bala māṁsa gāwate lukāila  
 Dekhiā napāwā sākhi.  
 Sukhai gaila ānta mukhe nāse mātā  
 Dantaro nāhi awasthā:  
 Kāse dhulādhul sari gaila cul  
 Larabara kare māthā.  
 Bibhatsa śārīra ākhi jhure nīra  
 Tini thāne bhailā bāg:  
 Kahaya Mādhawa saveo mariba  
 Tathāpi burhāse āg.

'Thou aged brother, do dance singing the qualities of Hari. Which day the body falls like a felled tree (is uncertain: then) what do you wait for? (chorus). (Your) longevity has declined. (You) have had recourse to a stick. (Your) feet do not move for steps. The main beam (back-bone) is broken; it has moved ahead. (Your) eyes have hidden in their pits. (Your) arteries have dried up; voice does not come out through (your) mouth; also the teeth have no stability. (You are) torn through and through by coughs; hair has dropped down; the head moves this way and that. The body (has become) awkward with three bends; water leaks through the eyes. Mādhaw (dew) says all will die; the aged precede.'

Rāmcaran, his nephew, then composed another serio-comic song on youth to match this song, warning every youth to be on the alert, since death is no respecter of age:

Rāg—Bhātīālī

Dekā bhāi, kisar hariṣ tor:  
 Cakṣu nedekhasa, ānande bhramasa.  
 Toka paille kāla cor. (Dhrung)  
 Achili chawāl bhaila juvā kāl  
 Kena tāta nāi man:  
 Āpadara bandhu yatane layio



Rām nām mahā dhan.  
 Āyu ādi kari yata dhan-jan  
 Sava kāla core hare:  
 Dekhi nedekhasa burhāka hāsasa  
 Chawāla kālate mare.  
 Yauvana garvaka jhānte parihari  
 Nāmaka laio yatane:  
 Kālara hātata briddha juvā nāi  
 Kahaya Rāmcarane.

"Thou youthful brother, what dost thou rejoice for? (Thou) seest not (with thy) eyes; (thou) roamest joyously. Thou art possessed by the thief of Time (chorus). Thou wast a child. Youth has come (to thee). Why dost thou not mind? Collect carefully the friend of need, the great wealth of the name of God. All (other) wealths and persons, longitivity included, are stolen by the thief of Time. Thou seest, yet thou seest not; thou laughest at the aged. (But) people die even in childhood. (So) give up your pride of youth forthwith and collect the name (of God) with care. The aged and the young are not differentiated as they are in the grip of Time, so says Rāmcaran.

Mādhawdew wrote songs and poems of various types besides, and his famous Bhatimā on Śaṅkardew is another masterpiece of his songs, which is quoted for the music of verse in particular.

"Jaya Guru Śaṅkara, sarva, guṇākara, yākeri nāhi upām:  
 Tohāri caranaka, reṇu śatakoti, bāreka karohō prañām.  
 Daraśita sundara, gaura kalewara, yaisana sura parakās:  
 Sakala sabhāsada ranjana yākeri, daraśane pāpa bināś.  
 Bine anga bhūṣaṇa, pekhi suśobhana gahīna gambhīra dhīramati:  
 Āyata kamala, nayana bara sundara, bayana cāndakaho jyoti.  
 Līlā gajagati, gamana bilokana, bāṇī megha gambhīra:  
 Pāṣaṇḍa mardana, kaliko kāle yāka sama nāhi dhīra.  
 Yohi Nārāyaṇa māyā bistāri, karu trijagata nirmāṇ:  
 Sanaka Sanātana, yogi yākeri mahimā kāvahu najān  
 Sakala carācara, pālanakārī, yo Hari dewako dewā:  
 Caturbayana Śiva, surapati yākeri, karu nita caranahi sewā.  
 Cāri Veda, śiromaṇi mājhe, yākeri caranā bikāś  
 Sohī dewaka, kayali kaliko, Śaṅkardewa parakāś  
 Tribhuvana vandana, Daivaki nandana, yo Hari mārāla kāmṣa:  
 Jagajana tāraṇa, dewa Nārāyaṇa, Śaṅkara tākeri aṃśa.  
 Māyā nara tanu, dhari Hari bhakati, kayali bahu paracār:  
 Sava nara pāpa-payodhi mājjala, tāhe kayali uddhār.  
 Ava disi cāri, Veda vicāri, vekata karu Hari nām;  
 Yākeri bayane, milāi gāi pāi manoratha kām.  
 Pandita mānī, veda vākhāni garva kayali sava cur:  
 Gīta kavīta guṇa, Śaṅkardewara, kīrti gayo bahu dūr.  
 Śrī yaś dāna, māna bhūta dayā sava guṇa sampanna thika:  
 Bhakataka bhakati, dāne karu guru, dayā tanaya adhika.  
 Harika mūruti, suruti mana magana, majjana ānanda sindhu:  
 Aisana nirmala, hrdaye bikaśita, bhakata kumuda indu.  
 Nija kula tāri, bhakati bistāri, bāndhala Hari guṇa setu:

Kali yuge pāpa payodhika sava nara, tārāṇa kāraṇa hetu.  
 Bhakati bhāṇḍāra, dvāra sava chori, mukuti kayali udās:  
 Eka Śaraṇa Hari nāma dharama kaho, rājā karu parakāś.  
 Ki kahaba Śaṅkara, dewara mahimā, jāni anta napāi.  
 Yākeri caranaka, reṇu śire paraśi, mukuti sukhe sukha pāi:  
 Mādhawa dīna, murukhamati kahay, bāṇi śuna sava loi:  
 Vine guru carāṇa, bhakati rakati, mukuti kavahu nohoi.  
 Ohi parama tattva, Vedaka vāṇi, jāni nar nakara birām:  
 Dharmaka karamaka, garavako chori, dāki bolahu Rāma Rām.”  
 This compares quite favourably with Śaṅkardew's *Toṭay* on Kṛṣṇa.

Mādhawdew's contributions to Assamese songs, poetry or drama are prominent enough and his authority beyond dispute. Mādhawdew's name itself carried such a weight that many a second-rate writer who would pass anything as acceptable to society would do it with Mādhawdew's colophon. The notorious *Ādi Carit* attributed to Mādhawdew is distinctly spurious, and so are *Amūlya Ratna* and *Guptamani*, attributed to Mādhawdew and sometimes to Śaṅkardew.

OTHER GREAT LUMINARIES. HARICARAN ANANTA KANDALI, who rendered the middle and the last part of the Tenth Book of the Bhāgawat under instructions of Śaṅkardew, concluded with a partial introduction of himself:

Ratna pāthak nāme pandita param:  
 Bhāgawat śāstre yār āchil vikram.  
 Śrī Hari Carāṇ nāme tāhana santati:  
 Vyākaraṇ parhi nām Śrī Candra Bhāratī. 19109.  
 Tarkat labhila nām Ananta Kandali:  
 Bhāgawate Ācārjya padabī bhailā balī.  
 Bhāgawata Bhattācāryya bole ārjya jane:  
 Tehē viracilā pad Kṛṣṇar carāṇe. 19110.

So the real name of this writer was Haricaraṇ, son of Ratna Pāthak. His scholarship in the science of Sanskrit grammar won him the title of Candra Bhāratī, while for his proficiency in controversies he was called Ananta Kandali. Later on he acquired scholarship in the science of Sanskrit grammar won him the title of Candra Bhāratī, while for his proficiency in controversies he was called Ananta Kandali. Later on he acquired scholarship in the Bhāgawata for which he was called Bhāgawat Ācārya or Bhattācārya.

In the close of the middle part of the Tenth Book of the Bhāgawat the writer gives an autobiographical note in better details (vs. 17851-57). Haricaraṇ Ananta Kandali's rendering of the five Kāṇḍas of the Rāmāyaṇa, excluding the first and the last, his admission and assignment of reasons for these renderings in view of the existence of Mādhaw Kandali's work, and the innovations introduced that give his new rendering a charm of its own, are detailed in his beautiful *apologia*. This shows that Haricaraṇ's father resided at Hājo in Gauhati and that

he was at first a controversialist or logician, and it is the Bhāgawat that softened his mind. He could write easily in Sanskrit, but he wrote in Assamese, simply for the good of the mass people. The following verse inscribed on a stone found on a hillock at North Gauhati suggests that the poet resided there for some time on the bank of the Brahmaputra:

Śīte taraṇi tāpena grīṣme Lauhitya bāyunā:  
Sukhadokhila lokānām maṇḍapah Candra Bhārateh.

The first part of the Tenth Book of the Bhāgawat, Ādya Daśam, written by Śaṅkardew himself, ends in 2476 verses with the early life or childhood of Kṛṣṇa. The second part of the same book, Madhya Daśam, compiled by Haricarāṇ begins with Kṛṣṇa and Uddhava going to Kuṇḍī and ends with the story of Dāmodar Vipra (vs. 12989-17858). The colophons contain the different titles of Haricarāṇ, as may be seen below:

Kṛṣṇar dāsaro dās Śrī Candra Bhāratī:  
Kṛṣṇa bine nāhi mor agatir gati. 13048.  
Ananta Kandali kahe Mādhawar dās:  
Kṛṣṇar caraṇe mātra kario biswās. 1414.

The third part of Śeṣ Daśam by Haricarāṇ begins with Śrī Kṛṣṇa's leaving for Kurukṣetra and ends with his desire for destruction of his family after restoring the dead sons of Vipra (vs. 17859-19122). The colophons, besides containing Haricarāṇ's general titles as Ananta Kandali, contain other titles:

Bhāgawatācārya, bhane bhaya lāja  
Tyaji bolā Rāma Rām. 18628.  
Bhāgawat Bhattācārya, kahe ehi mukhya kārya,  
Hari buli tarā bhava pās. 18814.  
Kahe Maha Maha Bhāgawat Bhattācārya:  
Bola Rām Rām āt pare nahi kārya. 18910.  
Bhāgawat Bhatta, kahe akapaṭa,  
Dāki bolā Rām Rām. 18937

References (vs. 19111-22) found in the Śeṣ Daśam make it sufficiently clear that Śaṅkardew by whose help Haricarāṇ could render this work was no more by the time it was completed. (vs. 19111-114).

BṚTTASUR BADH rendered from the last parts of the Sixth Book of the Bhāgawat, describing the death of the demon Britta in the hands of Indra, also belongs to Haricarāṇ Candra Bharati. Another poem, *Abhimanyur Juddha*, containing the following colophon appears to belong to this writer:

Tomār kinkar nāmat Kandali  
Eri nij yata kam.  
Bhāratar pad racibe lāgilā

Mane bhābi tayu nām:  
 Ananta Brāhmane            bole nirantare  
                                  Nare dāki bolā Rām. 412.  
 But the preceding couplet names Gopīnath Dwija:  
                                  Brāhmanar ghare            janam labhilō  
                                  Nabhaila sādthur pās....  
 Bole Gopināth                            mai bar anāth  
                                  Tumī dukhitar dhan. 411.

KUMAR HARAN describing the marriage between Uṣā and Aniruddha and the fight between Hara and Hari is Haricarāṇ Chandra Bharatī's most popular epic. In the Madhya Daśam (vs. 16248-16247), he has of course fully described this incident, but he has made it the subject-matter of an independent epic which displays his originality. He describes Uṣā's youthful dream in the beautiful *Chabi* metre, as also the report of this dream to her friend Citralekhā, and they are like his master-pieces. Another work of 159 verses with the colophons of Ananta Kandali is *Bhakti-Sādhana* or *Vaiṣṇavāmrit*. The work begins with Arjuna's enquiry of Kṛṣṇa as to *Śaraṇ* (initiation) and criteria of devotees; and the reply to it is, as told in the *Gīta* and the *Bhāgawat*, described by the energetic pen of this powerful writer.

RATNAKAR KANDALI OR SUKAVI SEKHAR is another great Vaiṣṇavite poet and follower of Śaṅkardew, who is often wrongly identified with Haricarāṇ Ananta Kandali, perhaps because of a similarity of the title and of the literary style, both being almost equivalent in power. Besides, all printed copies and manuscripts too, include Ratnākar Kandali's *Sahasra Nām Bṛttānta*, almost as a part and parcel of the *Kīrttan Goṣṭh*. Here is found a parallel of Haricarāṇ Ananta Kandali's desiring for the remains of Śaṅkardew's food and being allowed to render the remaining portion of the Tenth Book of the *Bhāgawat*. It would thus be possible to think that Ratnākar Kandali was another title of Haricarāṇ, had we not found it anywhere and had there been no mention of another person known to Śaṅkardew by that name. But from Daityāri Thakur we learn that Ratnākar Kandali like Vyās Kalai was an early follower and disciple of Śaṅkardew:

Ratnākar Kandali parhanta Gīta tay:  
 Vyāsa kalāi nāme janeka āchay.  
 Tānka sama guṇī nāi jātat Brahman:  
 Śaṅkardewat teho laiāchhe saran. 306.

Ratnākar was undoubtedly a writer of considerable power and pregnant with celestial fire. His first poem breathes a charm which has parallel only in a few verses of Mādhawdew.

Ki karilō ki karilō bhakati nakari:  
 Antake pāleka āsi rakṣā karā Hari. (chorus).

Nakarilō śire Mādhawak namaskār:  
 Ito mātā gota mor haila mahābhār.  
 Karṇa dui āche nuṣunilō Hari kathā:  
 Dugotā garttar bhār bahilohō brthā. 2019.  
 Jihbā mora āchante nalailō Rāma nām:  
 Dādurīr jihbā yena bhaila kona kām.  
 Nedekhilō nayane prabhur yena rūp:  
 Samyake jānilō dui ākhi andhakūp. 2020.  
 Yene citra bicitra mairāra bhāse pākhi:  
 Hari rūpa nedekhilō pāilo tena ākhi.  
 Hari pad tulasir nalailōho ghrān:  
 Jīwante marilō nāsā bhātīr samān. 2021.  
 Pindhilohō bāhuta aneka alankār:  
 Prabhur pūjāk nakarilō ekabār.  
 Kṛṣṇa kṛtya nakarilō bhailōho barbar:  
 Ito hasta bāhu michā mritak śawar. 2022.

'O what have I done, what have I done, by not being devoted: Protect me, O God, now that inevitable hour has come. (chorus). That I have not bowed to God with my head, it is simply a gross burden to me. That I have not listened to the glories of God, even while I have these two ears, I have borne the burden of these two holes for nothing. That possessing a tongue I have not uttered God's name, this tongue like that of a frog has been of no avail. That I have not seen the beauty of God with these eyes, I am fully convinced they are like black holes: my eyes, that have not seen the beauty of God, are like the wings of the pea-cock. That I have not smelt the sacred plant of His feet, I am dead though breathing, and my nose is as insensible as the furnace. That I have worn many an ornament on my arms, but have not saluted my Lord, and have become barbarous by not discharging my duties to God, these arms and hands have become useless like those of a corpse.'

These lines have only their parallel in the *Nām Ghoṣā*:

He Jihbā sadā tai	āmāta nirday bhaili
Kene nobolasa Rām bānī:	
Saṁsāra sāgare ito	Harise sudrirha nāo
Jāni Hari bulio kalyāṇī. 90.	
sabadese mātra priya	He Karṇa sadā tor
Tai sabda madhura jānasa:	
Koti amṛtatodhika	param madhur sabda
Śuna sadā Kṛṣṇa nāma-yaśa. 91.	
Śunio Hriday hera	brahmāṇḍa bhitare yata
Bastu āche toka nojoray:	
Tāka teji Kṛṣṇa nām	akshay amṛt piā
Santoṣaka labhio Hriday. 93.	

'O Tongue! you are ever so cruel to me: why should you not utter the name of God? Knowing that God is the only strong boat in this sea of the world, do utter His name and promote all welfare. O Ears! words are dear to you and you are acquainted with sweet words. Then

do listen to the glories of God that are sweeter than crores of ambrosial foods. Hear me, O Heart, all the things of the universe cannot satisfy you: then leave them off and drink nectar that knows no lessening, and secure content.' The seven noble effects of uttering the name of God related in Śaṅkardew's *Nāmāparadh* (vs. 65-66) have been reiterated here even with the same brevity.

Another work *Vaivaśwa Purāṇ* or *Dharma Nārāyaṇar Sambād* appearing with the following colophon may have been composed by Ratnākar Kandali:

Vaivaśwa Purāṇar pad kathā manohar:  
Anande racilā kavi Sukavi Sekhar.

The work describes how people were delivered from the region of Yama, and is based on various works as *Brahma Baibartta Purāṇ*, *Bṛhat Jāmal*, *Dasam Bhagawat*, *Padma Purāṇ*, and others.

Still another work of 228 verses, *Mahī Rāvan Badh* has the colophon of this poet.

Śrī Candra Bhārati bhane āri āna kām:  
Petak chārok dāki bolā Rām Rām. 218.

It is based on the Rāmāyana story how Mahī, a son of Rāwana, residing in the purgatorio, was recalled by Rāwana to come to his rescue against Rāma and how he was subsequently killed.

One *kathā Sūtra*, (D.C.A.M., pp. 90-91) closes with the colophon:

Ratnāwali Śrī Ratnākar, Kīrttan Gaurav āti bar  
Apar kīrttan jānibā ihār nām:  
Sātvata Tantrar Gīta sār, biracilō kathā Sūtra ā  
Bhāgawat Āchārye kahe bolā Rām Rām.

Apparently it refers to Haricarāṇ Ananta Kandali Bhāgawat Ācārya, son of Ratna Pāthak, and a great disciple and admirer of Śaṅkardew. But the learned editor of D.C.A.M. styles him as a son of one Hari Miśra, the founder of the Haridevī sect which may be a mistake of fact since only one Bhāgawat Ācārya is known who is no other than Haricarāṇ. It is, as the author says, another Kīrttan-Ghoṣā giving a gist of the twelve books of the Bhāgawat.

The authorship of *Janma Rahasya* with Sucandra Bharati's colophons is doubted. As no poet of this name is known, it may also be surmised that Sucandra Bhārati must be a misreading and misprint of Śricandra Bhārati, one title of Haricarāṇ. The contents of the book are a recapitulation of the incarnations of God regarded as so sacred:

*Bṛhat Symanta Harāṇ*, from the Tenth Book of the Bhāgawat, appears to be another independent work of Haricarāṇ with his own colophons.

ŚRIDHAR KANDALĪ is another famous poet whose works are sometimes confused with those of Ananta Kandalī. Not much is known regarding himself, but that he was a favourite of Śaṅkardew is vouchsafed by the incorporation, whenever it might happen, of his *Ghunucā Yātrā* in the *Kirttan Ghosā*. It not only suggests that Śrīdhar Kandalī was a favourite disciple or admirer of Śaṅkardew, but also that he was a poet of high order whose writing might be classed with that of Śaṅkardew. Superficial criticisms trying to identify him with Haricarāṇ Ananta Kandalī seem also to point to his greatness as a poet, the more so because Śrīdhar is also known as a resident of Hajo.

Śrīdhar Kandalī rendered the Aśwamedh Parva of the Mahābhārata long after Harihar Vipra did it. Interesting enough, in Śrīdhar's *Ghunucā* story and Śaṅkardew's *Oreṣā Varnan* allusions are connected with events of king Indradyumna of Orissa. That *Ghunucā* epic is derived from the Jagannath Purāṇa, re-inforced by other classics, his colophon says eloquently:

Śunioka nara-nāri huyā ek man:  
Jagannath Purāṇar kathā bitopan.  
Nāradar āge yeve Brahmāye kahanta:  
Jagannāth yātrā Ghunucār grhāgata. 93  
Āno śāstra mat āni miśra kari māje;  
Padyārthe racilō yeve buje sāmārāje.  
Śrīdhar Kandalī pad karilā pracār:  
Rām Kṛṣṇa buli tarā durghor saṃsār. 95.

The worldly nature of Kṛṣṇa portrayed here by Śrīdhar between two-co-wives, Lakṣmī and Ghunucā, are almost like that painted by Śaṅkardew in the drama of *Pārijāt Harāṇ*, between Rukmiṇī and Satyabhāmā. These quarrels are also true to life and dignified at the same time.

KANKHOWA KAVYA: Like *Rukmiṇī Harāṇ Kāvya* of Śaṅkardew and *Kumar Haran Kāvya* of Haricarāṇ, the small Kāṅkhowā Kāvya of Śrīdhar Kandalī is an extremely popular work in every Assamese household, nay, in almost every Assamese parent's lips. It is rather a Vaiṣṇavite version of an Assamese lullaby, extremely simple in its theme and treatment, quite original and wonderfully appealing to human sentiment in general, and motherly feeling in particular. It consists of two poems relating to Kṛṣṇa's childhood. The first poem begins with Yasodā's attempt to lull child Kṛṣṇa to sleep by infusing fear of a demon named Kāṅkhowa (Ear-Eater) who used to eat the ears of all children that would not sleep in the evening and who now was approaching child Kṛṣṇa that refused to sleep. The burden of the song is given as the chorus of the beautiful song:

Ghumati yāyore, Ore Kānāi, Hurre, Kāṅkhowā āse:  
Sakal śīsur, kāṇ khāi khāi, āsay tomār pāse:

'O Kānāi (Kṛṣṇa), get asleep forthwith, (for) yonder comes the Ear-Eater. He has already eaten the ears of all children (he has come across), and he is now approaching you.' This would no doubt suffice to charm any average child, and the troubles of the mother would be soon over. But in the present case, the reverse happened; for Kṛṣṇa was none but the omniscient God who passed through so many incarnations. Hence far from getting frightened to sleep, Kṛṣṇa was on the alert now and demanded of her to show this demon which he never heard of through all the past incarnations that he presently describes one by one. So he finally suggested that he would now feign sleeping and she should show him the demon coming. Yaśodā was dumfounded and could make no reply. Then Kṛṣṇa by his supernatural power made her forget him as God, and she admitted it was all false; gave him to suck her breast and thus put an end to this self-imposed trouble never to repeat it any more.

The second poem, though often combined, has no connexion with *Kāṇ-Khowā*, but is correlated with the first as events of Kṛṣṇa's childhood. They are rather complementary being events of the inducing to sleep in the evening and persuading to wake in the morning. It was already morning, but Kṛṣṇa still feigned asleep. All his playmates came and wanted Yaśodā to arouse him. This fond mother did not know what was her luck this morning and she readily complied with their request with a heart overflowing with affection and pride: "Awake, O Kṛṣṇa, awake, O lotus-eyed! It is morning. Drive your team afield." She then added: "Eta nidrā kara, kisara bhāgara, āditya udaya bhailā." 'For what are you so weary that you sleep so long? Look up, the sun is already in the horizon'. This mild chastisement fired Kṛṣṇa's wrath and he burst into saying: 'Mother, call me no more. Your words butter no bread. For days together I will not get up, will not eat anything, and will not go to keep cows. My heart bleeds to recall all injuries, and insults added to them. I am God, the great cause of this universe; and you are a milkman's daughter: and yet my breath almost stops to see you! All gods, not exclusive of Brahmā, serve me; and I am here keeping your cows by taking stale food. By coming out of the sea in the form of a charming woman, I had become renowned by feeding the gods with nectar; and here you have immortalised me as a thief of curd. Being incarnated in the house of Kardama as Kapila, I had delivered mother Dewahuti by unveiling the mysteries; and in your house, far from gleaning any knowledge from me, you would quarrel with me by day and at night! I must not tell you what more glories I command: so fie! that you thus want to pass for my mother.'

Kṛṣṇa then turns to this human side and again thus takes Yaśodā to task—"You had been a hard barren woman, the laughing-stock of the world; and people atoned to see you by uttering the name of God; and I have removed this blemish from you by being born to you as a



son. I feel ashamed to mention all your vices: my lips bleed to play on the bamboo flute, and being a royal wife yourself, you do not make me a flute of a few grains of gold! Surely your silver coins will be reduced to ashes while being stored under earth or in boxes. You send me food to the field, but it is such a handful, that I remain half-starved....While speaking all this I feel like weeping." This more than sufficed to infuse fear into Yaśodā's heart, the more so when Kṛṣṇa concluded by threatening that he would soon leave her as she was, for Mathura. Yaśodā was more than humbled once again and said 'Pardon me, O Kṛṣṇa, for this last time; and if you find me rough any more, chide me as you would.' This concluded Kṛṣṇa's pretension of wrath which had its desired effect; he jumped up to Yaśodā's lap and began to suck her breast as any other child, bringing home to Yaśodā that the earth is really round!

ANIRUDDHA RAM SARASWATĪ is another prolific writer who used different names or titles in his writing and who was wrongly identified with Haricarṇa Ananta Kandalī till of late. His autobiographical note really leaves no room for such confusions; he writes in the *Puṣpa Haraṇ Upaparva* of *Vana Parva*, both about himself and his patrons, king Nara Nārāyaṇ and his general Śukladhwaj.

Jaya Nara Nārāyaṇa nṛpati pradhān.  
Nāhi rabbitale rājā yāhār samān. 1420  
Yāhār kaniṣṭha Śukladhwaj mahāsay:  
Dānī mānī śiṣṭa santa loke praśaṃśay. 1422  
Hena Nara Nārāyaṇ nṛpati pradhān:  
Tāhān ājnāt Bhāratar upākhyān.  
Śudrakule jāt huyā pārhilo śāstrak:  
Gurubākye cinilōho Īśwar Kṛṣṇak. 1423.  
Piṭṛ mātṛye Aniruddha nām dilā:  
Kavicaandra nām got Dewāne bulilā.  
Rām Saraswatī nām nṛpati dilantā:  
Bhāratar pad mok karā bulilanta. 1424.

Other colophons show that he had other titles also. In the *Ādi Vana Parva*:

Bole Rām Saraswatī mai hīn jāti.  
Bhakti-dhane mok kini loā Lakṣmīpati. 193.  
Namo Nārāyan, Daivaki-nandan  
Bhakat bhaya-bhanjan:  
Bhārat Bhūsaṇe kare tuti-nati  
Kṛṣṇar nām smaraṇ. 825.  
Saukhe dhawalar pad mukta vidyādhār:  
Kahe Kavi Saraswatī Mukunda-kinkar. 1046

In the *Puṣpa Haraṇ Vana Parva*, the colophon:

Kahay Bhārat Candre ājnā-par mane:  
Samājike Rām nām bolā ghane ghane. 1169

The Vijay Upa Parva of Vana Parva, further notes:

Praṇamo Mukuṇḍa	Dewar caraṇe
Guṇe nāhi saṃsār:	
Āmār Bhārat	candra nām dilā
Kavi candra nām ār.	3321
Kahe Ratnakare	jāni nirantare
Dāki bolā Rām Rām.	

PATRONAGE OF KING NARA NARAYAN: Aniruddha Rām Saraswati speaks in very eloquent terms about the patronage of king Nara Nārāyaṇ as in the Ādi Vana Parva (vs. 201-05), and to the close of these chapters, and before he begins his Puṣpa Haraṇ Upaparva, he further repeats it (vs. 827-30). The vast extent and sincerity of patronage of king Nara Nārāyaṇ and the range of commentaries consulted are revealed in the *Puṣpa Haraṇ Kavyā* (vs. 838-42). The most conspicuous point to be noted is the mention of the cart-loads of commentaries of the Mahābharat that were allowed to be brought to Rām Saraswati's place, over and above the ones of the poet himself showing what marvellous scholar King Nara Nārāyaṇ himself had been, not to speak of the poet. By Aniruddha's own admission, Nara Nārāyaṇ's patronage was the gifts that could be enjoyed for seven generations after the poet himself. Such colophons are interspersed all through his writings with very respectful reference to Śaṅkardew also. Besides mention of poet Kāṃsārī, Śaṅkardew is also referred to by Aniruddha with profound respect along with king Nara Nārāyaṇ or Śukladhvaj, in the Baghāsūr Badh in the Vana Parva, as also in *Maṇicandra Ghoṣ* Upaparva. In concluding the *Kulācal Badh Kāvya* he pays great respect to Śaṅkardew as an incarnation of God and condemns those Brāhmaṇas who would not regard him as such.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL COLOPHON: The following autobiographical note in the Bhīṣma Parva says that he belonged to Camariā village in the Kāmarūpa district, his father was Kavi Curāmaṇi and his elder brother Kavi Candra whose encouragement helped this his younger brother a great deal. It is really suspicious.

Kāmrūp madhye grām nāhike upām:  
 Tāte grām bhailā Camariā yār nām. 1350.  
 Sehi grameswar bhailā Kavicurāmaṇi:  
 Pandit ganar madhye yāk agrgaṇi. 1351.  
 Govindar bhaktit yāhār din gaila:  
 Āta anantare tār dui putra bhaila. 1352.  
 Jyeṣṭha bhaila Kavi candra ati suddha mati:  
 Tāhān anuja bhaila Rām Saraswati.  
 Nij guṇe guṇākar Kavicandra bare:  
 Mahāśāstra parhay sakal guṇe darhe. 1353.  
 Tāhār anuja śreṣṭha Rām Saraswati:  
 Karayore mahanta savak karō nati. 1354.



Raja (1615-37) respectively. Aniruddha Rām Saraswatī refers to king Dharma Nārāyaṇ (1615-37) also as his patron, so constantly. In the *Bhīṣma Parva* he writes about it (v. 1361). In the *Sindhura Parva* or the *Sindhu Yātrā* also he mentions Dharma Nārāyaṇ (vs. 1021, 1091 ff). In the *Udyog Parva* again he shows a very intimate acquaintance with the family of king Raghudew, but refers to the elder of his two sons as Mukunda Nārāyaṇ (?*Parikṣit Nārāyaṇ*) dying a premature death and describes Bali Nārāyaṇ's marriage with Ratnamālā. All these evidences point to Rām Saraswatī's time as sometime between 1545 and 1640 A.D.

Aniruddha is evidently the most prolific and voluminous writer next only to Śaṅkardew and Mādhawdew. His various epics on the *Vana Parva* number no less than seven, besides his renderings of the *Bhīṣma Parva* and *Udyog Parva*. In the colophons of the latter, he uses only his title Rām Saraswatī, while in the former he uses his name Aniruddha, and in the latter part he uses his title Rām Saraswatī:

Aniruddha vadati śunio sādhu lok:  
 Mati alpa jāni kichu kṛpā karā mok. 3  
 Dwija Aniruddha kahe erā āna kām:  
 Abhiṣṭa pūraṇ hok bolā Rām Rām. 56  
 Viracilo Bhāratar Bhīṣma Parva pad. 1354  
 Rām Saraswatī bhaṇe erā āna kām. 1355.  
 Bole Rām Saraswatī praṇamoho māth.  
 Mai duhkhitak kṛpā karā Jagannāth. 1583.

But *Bhīṣma Parva* rendering was not entirely made by Aniruddha Rām Saraswatī. The colophons show that the battles of Kurukṣetra till that of the sixth day were described by Aniruddha, those from the seventh till the ninth day by Vidyā Pañcānan and that of the tenth day by Rām Saraswatī or Aniruddha again. In some manuscripts the descriptions till the ninth day of the Kurukṣetra war contain the colophons of Rām Miśra and that of the tenth day by Rām Saraswatī:

Nigadati Rām Miśra savāre āgat:  
 Nawa dina juddha ehi māne samāpat.  
 Daśa din pad kailā Rām Saraswatī:  
 Āmāsar kṛta ehi māne samāpati.

But "dvija Aniruddha" seems to be another poet, if not bogus.

Like the *Bhīṣma Parva*, the *Droṇa Parva* was also rendered by several poets including earlier ones. The poems on Arjuna's determination to kill Jayadrath contains the colophons of Rām Saraswatī at the beginning and end:

Mati anusāre bhaṇe Kavi Saraswatī:  
 Droṇa Parva kathā padabandhe nigadati. 661  
 Bole Rām Saraswatī eri āna kām:  
 Nirantare nare dāki bolā Rām Rām. 900

Again the description of the fight between Jayadrath and Arjun, and almost the whole of the latter part contain Rām Saraswatī's colophons showing a very large portion of Droṇa Parva as his composition. Another work *Kurmāwali Juddhā* contains the colophon of Sāgar Khari or Sagar Kavi, who is attempted to be identified with Aniruddha, without sufficient reason for so doing. *Aśvakarmar Juddhā*, another work, contains the colophons of Bhārat Chandra and Bhārat Bhūshan etc. evidently titles of Aniruddha Rām Saraswatī. *Yajna Parva* and *Kālajangha Badh* contain colophons of Kavi Chandra, Bhārat Candra, Bhārat Bhūshan, and Rām Saraswatī, one and all of which are titles of the reputed poet. *Khatāsūr Badh* with Aniruddha's colophon, and *Lakṣmī caritra* with Rām Saraswatī's colophon are also the works of the same writer.

BHIM CARIT is the most popular epic of Rām Saraswatī, with sufficient humour. It is also one of the books that are in almost every Assamese lip. It is based on the *Ādi Parva* describing the pitiful days of childhood of the Pandavas in general and the playful sports of Bhīma in particular. It relates how this Indian Hercules in his childhood would take by force the cakes off the hands of his playmates and would serve them with his proverbial slaps when they would rebuke, how he became a necessary evil to them for they feared to avoid him also. Bhīma's appearance, as he is described as a sacrifice before Bakāsūr, is remembered by almost every Assamese, old or young, as is done the caricature of the latter. 'The crowning beauty of the work is the picture of Bhīma's days in the house of Śiva, as a cowherd. Bhīma's daily routine of work, items of every meal, caricature of Śiva's home life, events in keeping Śiva's only bull with Kartik and Gaṇeś, his killing the bull and laying the blame at the sage Viśvāmitra's door who in fear made good his flight, his arrest of Kuver under alleged orders of Śiva, and so forth, are living snaps before almost every Assamese eyes. Rām Saraswatī's mastery over the poetic art is fully vindicated by many lines of *Bhīm Carit* almost passing as proverbs in the lips of every Asamīyā, young or old.

CONTRIBUTION OF MINOR POETS: Besides the works now noticed, there are many scattered works of Aniruddha such as parts of the *Virāt Parva*, *Nārī Parva*, *Aśwamedh Parva*, *Vyāsāsram Parva*, *Sabhā Parva*, *Ādi Parva*, *Pāncālī Vivāh*, *Vyādh Carit*, etc. He is also known to have rendered Jaydewa's *Gīta Govindam Kāvya*, and some books of the Bhāgawat too. (D.C.A.M., pp. 13-14). According to some, Aniruddha rendered the Eighteen Books of the Mahābhārat besides other works, and thus he is called the Assamese Veda Vyāsa. His works are burdened with references to endless commentaries, and he sometimes makes mention of his own verses and commentaries used. In the *Mañichandra Ghoṣ Vana Parva* he mentions of fifteen thousand verses of Vana Parva composed by him alone.

Sunā sabhāsad, huyā niśabad, manat ānanda kari:  
 Mañichandra Ghos, Rām Saraswatī, bicitra race dularī. 2365  
 Vana Parva kathā, param gahan, Purān Samhitā sār.  
 Pañcis hājār tika jānā ār, slok cāri śat hājār.  
 Agādh sāgar, Dvaipayane ār, kari āche nibandhan:  
 Kon śakti āk, bicār kariba, āmār vālak man. 2366.  
 Tathāpito ār, pad biracilō, pondhara hājār māt:  
 Ān kavisave, tini sahasrek, kari āche vidyamān. 2367

SARVABHAUMA BHATTACHARYA is another great writer who rendered the two parts of the *Svarga Khaṇḍa* of the *Padma Purān* as *Kṣudra Svarga Khanda* and *Bṛhat Svarga Khanda*. He gives a clear account of himself in the following verses of his *Padma Purān*:

Sārvabhauma Bhattācārya jyotiṣat sār:  
 Devi-upāsak āchilōho durācār. 168  
 Śaṅkarar sange vahu bādak karilō:  
 Bād bhanga huiā śāstra parhibāk gailō.  
 Kāśi deśe Viśveśwar Cakravartī nām:  
 Cāri Ved parhilōhō taite anupām. 169.  
 Pañca barṣa taite Veda śāstrak parhilō:  
 Anek śāstrak śiki jñānak labhilō.  
 Svarga Khanda rahasyak tahite jānilō:  
 Harik bhajibe lagi man thir kailō. 170  
 Eka din Guru mot kariā śāśvat:  
 Kāhanta gopya kathā jānilō manat.  
 Pūrvadiśe nij śakti Hari awatār:  
 Nij yaś dharma kīrti bhakati pracār. 171.  
 Nāmat Śaṅkar haiba sūdra kule jāt:  
 Brahmā Har ādi dewa janmiba tathāt.  
 Lokar tāran hetu santa mūrtti dhar:  
 Tāhāna carane karō śata namaskār. 172

'I am Sārvabhauma Bhattācārya, well-versed in astrology. I was an irreligious goddess-worshipper. I had long argued with Śaṅkardew and being defeated in scriptural debates, I went abroad for further studies of scriptures. There was (a professor) Viśveśwar Cakravartī at Benaras. I have studied the four Vedas there, so thoroughly for five years and have acquired vast knowledge by studying various other scriptures. It is there that I learned the mysteries of the Svarga Khanda and have determined to be initiated to God. One day my teacher revealed to me the secret that God with His power has incarnated in the eastern country, to preach the cult of love, in the Sūdra community as Śaṅkardew, and other gods as Brahmā and Hara also have been born there. He assumes that dignified form for the deliverance of people; I bow a hundred times at his feet.'

Sārvabhauma begins his rendering of *Svarga Khaṇḍa Padma Purān* bowing to the feet of Śaṅkardew, whom he so sincerely regarded as an incarnation as told by his teacher at Benaras, and then with salutation to Fish, Tortoise and such incarnations and then to such devotees,

Mādhawdew and Ananta Kandali; and he eulogises the Nām Dharma as best as Śaṅkardew or Mādhawadew did, giving references to his sources (vs. 1-39). In his *Bṛhat Svarga Khanda*, Sārvabhauma gives a detailed account of the disciples of Śaṅkardew elsewhere in India, confirming *Guru Guṇmālā*.

Tarkabhānu Vidyāpati Bhattāchārya var:  
 Rāghawa Ācārya Bibhushana ye Bhūdhār. 174.  
 Kaviratna Vidyāratna Umā Vāsudew:  
 Saraswatī Śrīkānta Gajendra Mahādew.  
 Rāmcandra Kṛṣṇadatta Viṣṇu Nārāyaṇ:  
 Gopāl Jaiminidew Dewa Janārdan. 175.  
 Tārāsavē āpon kuśal cintā kari.  
 Śaṅkarak Guru māni bhajilanta Hari.  
 Sūrya Vipra Kālidās Bhānu Harihar:  
 Caturar cūramaṇi jnāni Ratneśwar. 176.  
 Jyotiṣ Pradhān Śivakām Narottam:  
 Candradhar Sūryadhar Sūrya Sarmā nām.  
 Mūrha Rājā Ratnakhari Vijaykhari nām  
 Dharmakhari Vajrakhari Mahir Śrīrām. 177  
 Śrīguru Ganeś ye Śiva Sarmā nām:  
 Udit Udaykhari Dibākar nām.  
 Sarvakāle grah-upāsāk sarvajan:  
 Śaṅkarak Guru māni lailanta śaraṇ. 178  
 Kṣatriyar Mahārāj Rūp Sanātan:  
 Śaṅkarake Guru māni laileka śaraṇ. 179.  
 Jagadīśe svapna dekhi pāṇḍāk kahilā:  
 Bhāgawat laiā pūrva diśak larilā. 185  
 Yateka karila rūp sava dekhilanta:  
 Bhāgawat diā tāt śaraṇ lailanta. 186.  
 Mahā santa śilā santa Viṣṇupurī nām:  
 Brahmānaṇḍa āge kailā pūrva guṇa grām  
 Śaṅkara swarūpe Hari haiba awatār:  
 Tānka lāgi dibā Ratnāwali grantha sār. 189.  
 Mohor prapām cāri slok di pathāibā.  
 Tumio tāhānka bhakti kariā bhajibā. 190  
 Brindāban nāme ek Mahanta āchilā:  
 Śaṅkarak lāg pāi tehante bhajilā. 191.  
 Ramākāntā nāme śiṣya Mathurāpurata:  
 Śaṅkarak guru māni śaraṇ lailanta.  
 Rādhā nāme ek sānta āchil Gokule:  
 Śaṅkarak Guru māni sio bhakta bhaile. 192.  
 Sanyāsi Trijatā nāme Vajrat āchil:  
 Śaṅkarak Guru māni Harik bhajil.  
 Gopināth nāme santa Puṣkar tīrthata:  
 Sijaneo Śaṅkarak Guru mānilanta. 193.  
 Jagannāth Pāṇḍāsut Viṣṇudatta nām:  
 Rāmānanda Haridās Jaiminī Śrīrām.  
 Kṛṣṇa Jadunāth Kām ehi daś jan:  
 Śaṅkarak Guru māni lailanta śaraṇ. 194.

Rāmrūpe Sukladhwaj nṛpati pradhān:  
 Īsaveo Śaṅkarat lailanta saraṇ.  
 Hari buddhi karilanta Nara Nārāyaṇ:  
 Śaṅkarak Guru māni lailanta śaraṇ. 195.

VIDYĀ PANCĀNAN'S rendering of parts of Viṣṇu Parva, incorporated with those of Rām Saraswatī, gave rise to a confusion leading him to be identified Rām Saraswatī, wrongly. The full autobiographical note left us by Vidyā Pancānan in the colophons of Bhīṣma Parva (vs. 1147-55) itself shows that Vidyā Pancānan was the youngest son of Dviya Kaṇṭhābharāṇ in Bar Nagar on the bank of the Mānāh river now forming the boundary of the districts of Kāmṛūp and Goalpara, and that he finished composing *Ambā Caritra* of the *Bhīṣma Parva* in the month of Srāvaṇ of Śaka 1451 or 1529 A.D.

A SECOND RAMASARASWATĪ: The suspicion of a second Rām Saraswatī is confirmed below by the colophon of Gopināth Dviya who names his father, son of Bhīmsen and Pāthak of Sukladhwaj as Rām Saraswatī. It is the autobiographical note of Gopināth, his son, in his rendering of the Droṇa Parva (vs. 4012-14).

Pātcaurā nāme, āche ek grām, chilakon nām jār:  
 Ati bitopan, sarva susampan, dui jen svarga hār. 4012  
 Sehi grāmeswar, mahā sesandhar, Bhīmsen dvijabar:  
 Jār jaś rāśi, adyāpi prakāśi, jen pūrṇa śāśadhar. 4013.  
 Tāhān santati, Rām Saraswatī, Pāthak Śukladhwaj:  
 Jen Śuke guru, Angira Tambaru, āro nuhi patantar.  
 Tāhāna tanay, ati śisunay, Gopināth dvijabar:  
 Hṛasva dīrgha chande, racilā pravandhe, kathā Mahā

Bhāratar 4014.

While the native village of the poet-laureate was at Camaria, the village of this second Rām Saraswatī was Patcaura Chilakon in Kāmārūpa and his father was Bhīmsen who had the title of Kavi Churāmaṇi, and so forth. This is re-iterated in an earlier verse of the *Droṇa Parva*:

Kāmṛūp madhye sār: Pātcaurā nām yār.  
 Tār māje ek grām: Chilakon yār nām. 284

This then finally proves that there is no room for confusing Vidyā Pancānan with Rām Saraswatī and this second Rām Saraswatī with the poet-laureate of Nara Nārāyaṇ's court. Vidyā Pancānan is also the author of *Karna Parva Mahābhārat*, and *Pātālakaṇḍa Rāmāyaṇa* is also ascribed to him.

KAMSARĪ KAYASTHA is referred to so respectfully by Rām Saraswatī in his *Puṣpa Haraṇ Vana Parva* (vs. 1425-26). This may signify that Rām Saraswatī won the king's patronage for such poets as Kamsārī who helped him by composing some parts of the *Mahābhārat*



upto Pāṇḍavas living in concealment; and Kāmśāri appears to have rendered *Dakṣiṇ Go-Grih* and *Kirāt Parva*, with such colophons:

“Bhaṇati Kāmśāri pad Dakṣiṇ Go-grih.”

“Kṛṣṇar kinkare kahe Kāyaṣṭha Kāmśāri.”

“Sukavi Kāmśāri nāme, pada vandhe nivandhila

Birāt Parvar kathā prāi.”

The autobiographical note in the *Virāt Parva* (vs. 1166-67) states that Kāmśāri composed these verses of the Mahābhārat by staying in the house of Mādhawdew. Earlier colophons of the *Virāt Parva* name Pitambar Kayastha.

Śrīmanta Gābharu khān, sahe putre jay-yuta

Aro bhrātri yatek sodar:

Tāhān bacan śuni, ati mugdha bhāwe pāche

Likhila Kāyastha Pitambar. 641

Bhūyār madhyat, praval kulat, āchilanta Śiromani:

Śri Dailad Khā, grām nāme yār, āchil satya Bhavānī. 572

Jñānimadhye sār, tāhāna pravar, Śrīmanta Gābharukhā nām:

Hari pad sevi, mahā yatna kari, racilā pad upām. 573

Do we then understand that Kāmśāri (lit. enemy of Kāmśa) or Pitambar (that is, Kṛṣṇa) was one and the same poet of the Kayastha caste and was a Bhūyā whose family name was Gabharu Khan?

RAMCARAN THAKUR was tutored in his childhood by his maternal uncle Mādhawdew, for his father, Rāmdās, almost lived together with Madhawdew. Daityari, Ramcaran's son, gives a vivid picture of his father's childhood passed under strict care of Mādhawdew, how he became a ripe scholar by beginning with the alphabets and grammar of Sanskrit language and ending with the study of scriptures including Ratnāwali and Ratnākar (vs. 941-51).

Rāmcaran may have been in his teens when Sankardew passed away, for while he was under the tutorship of Mādhawdew, the latter is described as sometimes going to Pātbausi (v. 943) evidently to meet Sankardew, whence 1550 A.D. may be taken as the approximate time of birth of Rāmcaran. Rāmcaran really played a great role in the life of Madhawdew almost similar to that played by the latter in the life of Sankardew, and was the only true disciple of his uncle to whom he could refer with confidence, and Daityārī's *Guru Carita* is pregnant with such facts. The most important of such facts is Ramcaran's collection of the *Kīrttan Ghōṣā* manuscripts from different parts of the country with great trouble, (vs. 1576-88). Rāmcaran was a faithful guide till the last moment of Mādhawdew's life by sheer strength of his character which the latter long observed and tested (vs. 1163-86).

Rāmcaran's *Guru Carit* is practically the first authority for all information regarding Sankardew or the Vaiṣṇavite religion and litera-

ture of Assam. In spite of the shortcomings in the editing of his work, there can be no denying the fact that Rāmcaran who was almost the man on the spot must wield sufficient authority as the source of first-hand information on the subject. Here and there he actually mentions what Mādhawdew said to him on certain points (v. 1564).

Rāmcaran's nice verse-rendering of Śaṅkardew's *Bhakti Ratnākara*, complete in 1085 couplets, and about thirty chapters on different phases of the cult of love gives a gist of the whole work in the last chapter in his own words (vs. 1076-84).

One *Tikā Bhāṣya*, attributed to Rāmcaran, and written as a discourse between Śaṅkardew and Mādhawdew on Bhakti and allied subjects, contains such lines among others:

Āmio rahibō Gopālat antakāle:  
Gopāl sahite āmi ram tattva kāle.

This is used to mean that Mādhawdew appointed Gopāl (Ātā) as his successor. That is not borne by facts, and Daityāri, among other biographers, speak to the contrary, (vs. 1559-1574). Moreover neither the composition nor the contents show that this is Rāmcaran's own work. The colophons give the name Rām Candra and not Rām Caran, and we nowhere find him deforming his name like this even for rhyme's sake.

KAMSA BADH is an Anka (drama) written by Rāmcaran. Śaṅkardew is also said to have composed one *Kaṃsa Badh Nāṭ* (Bezbaruwa's *Śaṅkardew*, Ch. X) not extant now. Any way, this drama shows that Rāmcaran Thakur was not only proficient in writing verses and songs, but had also mastery over dramatic art.

GOPAL ĀTĀ, better known as Bhavānipuria Gopal Ātā, for there are many a Gopāl in Assamese Vaiṣṇavite literature, is known to have hailed from near Garhgāo in upper Assam and to have settled at Bhavānipur in Kāmārūp whence the connotation to his name. His mother is known to be one Vrajāṅgī and his father, Kāmeswar. He is said to have been initiated at about 25 years of age by Mādhawdew himself. Gopal Ātā is well known as the leader of the Kāl Saṃphati.

Gopāl Ātā's literary works are the two dramas, *Janmayātrā* and *Uddhawa Sambād*. The former deals with the birth of Kṛṣṇa and events preceding and succeeding it, and is sometimes presented as two dramas *Janmayātrā* and *Nandotsav*, the latter dealing with the festival performed in the house of Nanda and Yaśodā where Kṛṣṇa was kept in concealment immediately after his birth. The last song of this drama, echoing Mādhawdew's *Bar Gīt* "Ogo Māi, tohār tanay Yadumani", describing the merriments of the milkmaids at Kṛṣṇa's appearance in Nanda's house, is beautiful. His *Bar Gīts* also have a similar charm

and his other drama *Uddhawa Sambād*, is worthy. Gopal Ātā must have been of similar age with Rāmcaran and by general acceptance his time is 1541-1611 A.D.

Gopālcaraṇ Dvija is the author of the renderings of Bhāgawat Book III and Harivaṃśa. In the beginning of the former work, he eulogises Śaṅkardew and says that he (like Ananta Kandali) only takes the remains of Śaṅkardew's food; for Śaṅkardew already wrote his *Anādi Pātan* from the Third Book of the Bhāgawat and Gopāl Dvija was only following his suit (vs. 691, 1898-99):

Śrīmaṇṭa Śaṅkardew, a sincere devotee of Kṛṣṇa, incarnated himself in Kāmarūpa. By wishing welfare of the people and ever controlling the wicked, he has revealed the love of God in various ways. He has published several scriptures, revealing love God, and has given me my eyes. My indebtedness to him will not cease even if I speak well of him for crores and crores of years. It is he who has acquainted us with Friend Kṛṣṇa and introduced the Devotees to us; it is he who has shown us the Love of God by discarding the paths of knowledge and ritualism; no one can be such a Friend. I have written these verses by following those of Śaṅkardew: What fruit I desire from these verses is that wherever I may be born, let me have love for Vaiṣṇavas and devotion to Śaṅkardew.'

In the *Descriptive Catalogue* the time of this poet's translation of *Harivaṃśa* is suggested as 1558 A.D. and he is introduced as flourishing in the reign of Raghudew (1581-1603) keeping a Sanskrit school at Barnagar and attracting such scholars as Vaikunthanāth Bhattadew (1558-1638), thus showing that Gopāl Dvija flourished about 1540-1610 A.D., and that his *Harivaṃśa* was his earlier work than his rendering of the Bhagawat Book Three which he appears to have done some time after the demise of Śaṅkardew, as may be understood from the references. This would point to his rendering of his Tṛtīya Skandha Bhagawat by the close of the sixteenth century. His rendering of the *Harivaṃśa* is far from a literal translation of the Sanskrit work of that name:

Gopāle gurur pāw praṇamiā mane:  
Baladew vākya śire dhariā yatane.  
Iṣṭa Kṛṣṇa dewatār aruṇ caraṇe:  
Padacay bhane Dvija Gopāl Caraṇe.  
Harivaṃśa Bhāgawat Śrī Viṣṇu Purāṇ:  
Tinir sangame kathā haibek uthān.  
Yamunā Jāhnabī Saraswatī eka sthān:  
Prayāge vahay ito tāhār samān...  
Eke Harivaṃśa kathā ati sucarit:  
Tāte Śrī Bhāgawat karilō miśrit.  
Śrī Viṣṇu Purāṇako karilō jarit:  
Tini mīli haiba ati svād biparīt.

GOPAL MISRA, grandson of Harihar Ācārya, son of Baladew or Dharmāi, born at Mālipur, is the author of *Ghoṣā Ratna*, a work apparently written in imitation of Mādhawdew's *Nām-Ghoṣā*, describing the Bhakti Cult. It has the following respectful references to Śaṅkardew, Dāmodardew and Mādhawdew in order.

Śrīmanta Śaṅkar śubhāśay. Dāmodar yaśpra kāśay.  
 Bhagawat kṣīr-payodhit gaila tal:  
 Śrīmanta Mādhaw nām dhari, biṣayar sukh parihari,  
 Kṛṣṇa yaś karila bistār:  
 Dāmodar mat anusari, mukhe Govindar nām dhari.  
 Santa Hari nām bakhānilō sārāsār.

It is this Gopāl Miśra who is identified with the founder of the Ulubari and Khudiā Satras and a disciple of Dāmodardew (D.C.A.M., p. 52). It is also stated that Gopal Miśra's disciple was Niranjandew who initiated king Jayadhwaj Siṃha (1654-63) and founded the Āuniati Satra at Mājuli. Banamālīdew is said to be another disciple of Gopāl Miśra. His *Ghoṣā-Ratna* was perhaps composed by 1588 A.D., and is a work of course far inferior to *Nām-Ghoṣā* in merit, as any verses selected at random may show. Other works as *Parādharmā Nirūpaṇ*, *Śaṅkhacur Badh* and *Mahīśāsūr Badh* are also attributed to him. He appears to be of similar age with the other two Gopāls, Ātā and Dviya, only if he is not the same person as Gopāl Dviya whose colophon is quoted above.

There are several other works known as *Santa Nirṇay* *Santa Sampradāi*, *Santa carit* and others attributed to Kṛṣṇa Bhārati, Govinda Dās and Kṛṣṇ Ācārya respectively giving accounts of the saints of Kāmarūp and their religious institutions. Of these Kṛṣṇa-Bhārati is reported to be a great scholar and Vedāntist, referred to even by such scholars as Puruṣottam Vidyābāgis, the reputed author of *Prayoga Ratnamālā Vyākaran*, of king Nara Nārāyaṇ's court. He is styled as Vedānta-Vana-Keśarī or the Lion in the forest of Vedānta philosophy, whose presence frightened all elephants in the form of average scholars:

Kṛṣṇa Bhāratirāyāti Vedānta keśarī:  
 Palāyurdham palāyurdham bho bho pandita diggajāh.

*Santa Sampradāi Kathā* is in simple prose and ends with such sentences as "Sādhūsavak sambudhiye sewā kariba, etekese muktik labhiba. Aparādhīsavako sadāi kṣamā kariba. Etakā Mahantar Caritra pustak samāpta." *Santa Carit* is a similar work in verse, bearing "a striking resemblance" with the contents of *Santa Nirṇay*. There are many other such works as one Rāmānanda's *Santa Sār*. It is difficult, and also useless, to ascertain their authors and their dates. In all probability the first few of such works were written sometime between 1600-1650 A.D. after the main pillars of Vaiṣṇavism were gone and it was

divided and subdivided into sects and subsects and into *Samhatis*. These works were mostly written with the primary narrow view of bringing this or that sect or sub-sect or *Samhati* into prominence.

PRITHURAM DVIJA the author of *Musal Parva Mahābhārat* is the subject of certain controversy in regard to his time. He leaves us the following autobiographical note regarding himself and his time and work:

Jayyukta Pratāp Ballabh mantrīvar:  
 Sandikai vamsāt janma guṇar mandir:  
 Muni candra siddha candra śake mantrī pāila:  
 Raṇ kari śatru nāśi yaśak rākhilā... ..  
 Bhāratar śeṣ kathā racilō payār:  
 Doṣ dekhi buddha jane kṣemibā āmār.  
 Bhaṇe Pithurāme dhari caran Kṛṣṇar:  
 Bolā Rām Rām save taro saṁsār.

This says that Prithurām wrote this work on the *Mahābhārat* under the encouragement of his patron Pratāp Ballabh, born in a Sandikai family, who became a minister in the Saka signified by 7 (Sages) 1 (Moon) 4 (accomplished saints) 1 (Moon), which taken in the reverse order, as is the established method, becomes 1471 Saka corresponding to 1495 A.D. But some would like to equate Siddhas (accomplished Saints) to Muni, giving 7, and working out the Śaka 1717 corresponding to 1795 A.D. against practice, which may not be supported. It was then written about the close of the fifteenth century, under the patronage of a minister, Pratāp Ballabh Sandikai, serving Ahom king Sipimfa (1493-97) who was succeeded by the famous Dihingīā Raja?

Besides these prominent personalities, there are a large number of minor poets whose works, dates or identities have not been fully traced, or their interests are such as they deserve little more than a passing notice. Dāmodardew (1488-1598) is of little importance in literature for his own contribution as for the contribution of Vaikunthanath's *Kathā-Gītā* and *Kathā Bhāgawat*. He wrote no works worth the name, but is said to have composed a few songs, even then not so worthy. There are other writers who appear to belong to the latter half of the seventeenth century. There are also different names in the colophons of certain single works, one or other of whom may fall within this period while another or others fall within the next. Again there are others who appear with different names in the colophons and are already discussed.

DIPIKA CHANDA: (?Dipika Candra or the Effulgent Moon) by one Puruṣōttam Gajapati is another work the time and the authorship of which has been a subject of long controversy. The early surmises were

made on the basis of the following autobiographical note found in the book.

“Cāri rūp dhāri                      Śrirām Lakṣmaṇ  
    Bharatāi Satrughaṇ;  
 Henay Rāmar                      pade majiyoka  
    Āmār, bālak man.  
 Tāhān vaṃśat                      janma bhailō hena  
    Kāro mane ahammam;  
 Kātar kariā                      śaraṇ paśilō  
    Pāmar Puruṣottam.”

Also elsewhere “Tayu nij anujar nāti Puruṣottam” saying that the author was the grandson of the royal brother of King Rāmacandra of Oudh. This drove some scholars to trace the descent of one king Rāmcandra in the Jitāri dynasty that ruled in ancient Assam, and to calculate and find the time of Puruṣottam Gajapati and his work in the eleventh century. This was erroneous at the beginning. To have placed any reliance on this autobiographical note, one must have done it as a whole or not at all, but never piece-meal. If the author explicitly called himself a grandson of the brother of king Rāmcandra of Oudh, one could not be justified in trying to find for him another dynasty of kings in Assam. The next point was in regard to language.

“Citra-gupta nāme dui likhak nirbhay;  
 Śubhāśubha pāpa-puṇya teraj karay.” 39

The word “teraj” is undoubtedly Islamic and hence a post-thirteenth century word for this work. But this may also be a copyist’s interpolation which by itself cannot vitiate the whole work. Yet the general tone too appears comparatively too modern, a few instances of which may be cited:

“Pad barhā haba buli āmi nelekhlō.” (v. 267)  
 “Pat horā dhūrta rajā mantrigaṇa yata.” (v. 340)  
 “Bāpe powe bhāi bhāi kandal kariba:  
   Jivikār arthe ghor katā-kati haiba.” (v. 478)  
 “Haiba maha khaluā Brāhman gaṇe yata. (v. 482)  
 “Vaiṣṇavar veś dhari pindhi dhuti fot” (v. 483)  
 “Petuā Brāhmaṇe nāśibeka jagatak.” (v. 489).

It is divided into chapters called the Kalās (phases of the Moon) whence most probably the book was named *Dīpikācandra* (Effulgent Moon) rather than *Dīpikāchanda* which would convey no proper sense. The first is Dewatā Kalā (vs. 14-79), describing the gods and their doings. The second is the Brahmakalā (vs. 80-131) showing the greatness of Viṣṇu and Vaiṣṇavas, where Śiva says to Pārvatī: “Vaiṣṇave Viṣṇu āka jānā sārottar. (v. 120). ‘Know the essence of truth that a Vaiṣṇava is Viṣṇu himself.’

The third is the Vaiṣṇava Kalā (vs. 132-175) where the various rights and duties of Vaiṣṇavas are described. The fourth or the Rāja-kalā (vs. 176-203) describes kingdoms of ancient days. In the fifth, sixth and seventh are Dharani kalā (vs. 204-11), Mahīpati Kalā (vs. 277-365) respectively. In the eighth or the Pāṣaṇḍa Kalā, Śiva says how wicked advice of the Brahmans directing men to worship Durgā would work their ruin;

“Vipra vākye moha hui; Kāro eko gati nui. 367  
 Haṁsa chāg bali kari; Tomār nāmak smari.  
 Tumi gati dibā buli; Lokak kahay tuli. 368  
 Param Iṣwar Dew; Tāhanka nakare sew. 369.  
 Durācār Vipragan; Āsā diyā lobhe man. 370  
 Kali kāle Vipra gan; Bauddha kāme kare man. 374.  
 Veda-ārtha parihari; Jivikak mane kari.  
 Pāṣaṇḍa āgame citta; Dhan jan bhāryyā bitta. 375.  
 Sava lok kari nās; Howe narakat vās. 376.

Curiously enough, these last few lines remind one of some similar lines of *Namghoṣā* (vs. 53, 59 ff).

Thus it is a regular pro-Vaiṣṇavite work showing the superiority of the Vaiṣṇavas, condemning all that is low in Brahmans, identified Buddhists. The work starts with salutation to both Hari and Śiva at the outset, as elsewhere, and as a matter of fact, in the second chapter attempts at establishing that Candra Vipras or the Brahmans, having their origin from Brahmā are equal to Suryya Vipras or Daibajnas, having their origin from Rudra or Śiva. The work is culled from various sources as Śiva-Raḥasya, Haṁsakāki, Yāmal Saṁhitā, and the Bhāgawat. So the work at the outset thus introduces itself:

“Jaya namo Hari Hara Śiwa Niranjana:  
 Pralaya saṁhāra ādi dewa Sanātana. 1.  
 Brahmamaya mūrti yāra kṣaya byaya nāi:  
 Hena Sadāsiwa pāwe praṇamo sadāi 2  
 Brahmārūpe srajā pālā Viṣṇu rūpa dhari:  
 Rudra rūpe niyā prabhu jāgāta saṁhari. 3  
 Hena Maheswara caraṇa hṛdi dhari:  
 Gurura kṛpāka mane parama sādari. 4  
 Rachibo Dipika Chanda(?) nāme grantha pada:  
 Digpati savāro caritra vidagadha. 5  
 Śiwa Raḥasyata Hare Jayata kahanta:  
 Gauriye puchanta yena kahiā āchanta. 6  
 Āru Haṁsa Kākata kahichā Nārāyaṇe:  
 Mahā Pūrāṇato kaila Śuka mahājane. 7.  
 Yāmala Saṁhita Hare Gaurira āgata:  
 Kahiā āchanta Rājā-niti yena mata. 8  
 Tāke kichu barnāibāka mora bhaila mati:  
 Puruṣottama mora nāma Gajapati. 9

Prathame Kahanta Hare Gaurira āgata;  
 Saptama adhyāya ante Śiwa Rahasyata. 12.  
 Śuniyo Dipika Chanda(?) kalā awatāra:  
 Gaurira āgata Hare kahilanta sāra. 13

Curiously enough, besides the general composition perfectly agreeing in the method of Vaiṣṇava writers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the third verse agrees word for word and line for line with the rendering of the Bhāgawat Book Ten by Śaṅkadev himself:

“Brahmā rūpe srajā pālā Viṣṇu rūpa dhari:  
 Rudra rūpe niyā tumi jagat saṁhari.” 82

As the author definitely and insistently calls himself a king of Oudh, and as there is not the slightest chance for him to be a king of Assam, it is upto us to see whether it is or not a verse-rendering of some particular Sanskrit work by some unknown or anonymous Assamese writer of Vaiṣṇavite period about which possibility there are already some suggestions from internal evidence. True it is that in the text itself there is no hint whatsoever that it is an Assamese rendering of some particular Sanskrit work; but neither is there any proof to the contrary, showing that it is not. From the History of Orissa by G. Toynbee we learn that the native sovereigns of Orissa bore the title of “Gajapati Rajas” or Śri Utkaleswar Gajapati Mahārājā” (p. 24). Also one king named Puruṣōttam Gajapati is known to have ruled in Orissa towards the end of the fifteenth century, and to have been succeeded by his son Pratāp Rudra who did his utmost to drive away the Buddhists from his kingdom. Pratāp Rudra, dying without an issue was succeeded by his minister Govinda Vidyādhara in 1541 A.D. (D.C.A.M., 1930).

Also Mādhawdew’s *Nām-Mālikā* written in his extreme old age at Koc-Bihar probably in the early nineties of the sixteenth century, was an Assamese rendering of the Sanskrit compilation by Puruṣōttam Gajapati. Mādhawdew himself writes all about Puruṣōttam Gajapati:

“Puruṣōttama nāme nareswara Gajapati:  
 Tāna ājnā pāli dvijagaṇa mahāmatī.  
 Purāṇa Bhārata Smṛti Āgamaka cāi:  
 Nānā grantha sangraha karilā ekathāi.  
 Kṛṣṇa nāma mahimā pāilanta yatamān:  
 Lekhi āni savāka karilā ekathān”.  
 “Parama Mahanta Gajapati Puruṣōttama  
 Likhāi āche ślokaṇa yena anukrama.  
 Sehi anukrame āmi racibō payār;  
 Kṛṣṇar prasāde hauka lokata pracār.”

The work seems complete in sixteen *kalas* (chapters) with 996 verses in all. One manuscript of it is said to contain the following reference



even to Śaṅkardew himself. (Assamese Grammar and Origin of the Assamese language, Introduction 111, p. 32):

“Sito-save pot yāi; rākhantā upāy nāi.  
Dekhi Kṛpāmay Hari; nāna rupe awatāri.  
Loka-save aparyanta; nām dāne taribanta.  
Srimanta Śankar nām; Santa mūrti anupām.”

A reference to “the sixteen nāmas” and to persons doing evil deeds leaving off the habits of respective castes (Varṇa) apparently has a condemnation of the religion preached by Caitanyadewa. So it appears that it is a post-Śaṅkardew and even post-Caitanyadew work.

“Karṇat kaḥiba kaṭhā japi ṣolla nām;  
Varnācār eri karibeka manda kām” 557  
“Tantra, mantra kariā bhāndibe jagatak;  
Dhan dhānya pāibe dekhāiā sāstrak.” 564.

Puruṣottam Gajapati is known as a king of Orissa, himself a post-seventh century writer (J.A.R.S., Vol. 111, p. 32), and some would call him a contemporary of Mādhawdew (*Āsām Bāndhav*, Vol. II, p. 96) while Purushottam Thakur and Sārvabhauma includes him as a disciple of Śaṅkardew.

**FOUNDER OF THE SECT:** Several works such as renderings of the *Bhagawat* Books Four and Five, and portions of the *Mahābhārat Ādi Parva* upto 385 verses and one *Dharmar Gīt* containing a few hundreds of religious songs contain the colophon of another *Aniruddha*, who is not *Aniruddha Rām Saraswatī*, but is apparently a *Kāyastha* or *Bhuyā*. His rendering of the *Bhāgawat* Book Five contains the following autobiographical note:

Lohit uttar kākḥare prakāṣe, Nārāyaṇ Pur bandha.  
Tār madhya bhāge, mājar tāluk, kaḥibō kata mahattwa:  
Param sampanna, bitopan thān, amrāwati yena mata.  
Tār antargat, Viṣṇu Bālikunci, bhaileka grām biṣeṣ:  
Śaṅkar Mādhaw, upāsā kariā āchile bhakta aṣeṣ.  
Sei grāmeswar, bhaileka gomasthā Mahipāl nām yār:  
Sakal lokar madhyat bhailek, yāhār guṇ pracār.  
Tāhān santati, Briha dalapati, apar Hari Dalai.  
Duihāno kaniṣṭha, Gangā Navagiri buliā save bolai:  
Vyākarna sāstrat, param pandit, āchileka mahā dhīr:  
Śaṅkarar dui caran pankaje karicil buddhi sthīr.  
Tāhān santati, bhaila *Aniruddha*, najāne sāstra niṣcay.  
Gopālar dui caran samparke, mane jena upajay.  
Param dewatā, hridayat thāki, dila jena anumati:  
Sei anurūpe, pañcam skandha, racilā kathā samprati:

And from Rāmānanda, (vs. 323-41), this village Bālikuci at Nārāyaṇpur is known as the birth-place of Mādhawdew. A good deal of confusion and misunderstanding about this poet has been removed by the publi-

cation of a biography of this important author by one of his successors Cidānandadew (1825-80) compiled from an earlier biography composed by one Kṛṣṇadās Dvija, that was partly damaged (vs. 10-11 ff). Account of this biography of Aniruddha is considered reliable, mainly because it agrees with the autobiographical notes of the poet himself as also with other historical facts. (vs. 39-46). In the autobiographical note we miss the names of Aniruddha's parents, Gondadew and Ājali, which are supplied here. This biography also gives the date of Aniruddha's birth as the Thursday of the ninth day of the bright moon, the fifteenth day of Baisākha in the Śāka 1475 corresponding to 1553 A.D. and his early name as Harakantha.

Candra Veda ghora Vān, Śake bhaila janma tān  
Pañcadas dine Vaisāgat:  
Śukula navamī tithi, sarva śubha grahadṛṣṭi  
Guru bāre bhailanta bekat. 56  
Haiba Harakantha nām, pracāriba guṇa nām  
Jīwa sava tariba apār. 58.

As Harakantha grew older, he went to Bhawānipur, became a disciple of Gopāl Ātā and was christened as Aniruddha, for the special significance that he was predicted to close other paths save of love.

Gopāleo bulilanta dekhi bicakṣaṇ:  
Ihān pāwat loke laibanta śaraṇ.  
Anyatra śāstrar path kariā nirodh:  
Bhakatir pathe mātra karaibeka bodh. 83.  
Etekese ān nām bhailā Aniruddha:  
Samasta śāstrar pracāriba gūrha tattwa. 84.

When after staying for about three years with his master, now Aniruddha would return home, Gopāl Ātā was much moved and said he would leave him only on condition that he would be a preacher. Aniruddha showed his reluctance on this point on the ground that he being a Bhuyā or chief was entrusted by his father with the government of five cities (Pañcapur), namely Lakṣmipur, Bihpur, Nārāyappur, Dhalpur, Nāgpur and Kalangpur:

"Tumi sama mahā bhakta nāhike āmār:  
Ehi hetu diō laiā yāio Guru bhār. 100"  
"Pañcapur grām pitā dilanta bibhāgi:  
Tāka eri āilō tayu pada sewā lāgi. 102".

Gopāl Ātā at last prevailed on Aniruddha, appointed him a preacher, handed over to him the scripture *Kalpataru* which fell into Gopāl's hand through Mādhawdew from Śaṅkardew:

Śrīmantā Śaṅkardewe yibā śāstra khāni:  
Ātā Mādhawak dilā Ācārya bakhāni. 105  
Mādhaw Guruwe dilā mok sehi śāstra:  
Tumi bine śāstrar āche kon pātra.  
Eteke tomāk āmi sehi śāstra dilō:  
Āji hante tok Bāp Ācārya pātīlō. 106

Aniruddha came back home with this scripture, first initiated his parents with it. He also initiated a Muhammadan tailor, Dheli Darjī, at his request, among other early disciples, and christened him as Dhyānpati, and his descendants are still known as of Dheli Barā family. It was from the month of Māgh in the Śāka, 1530 (1609 A.D.) that Aniruddha started preaching work:

Ito Dheli Darjiyeo paśila śaraṇ:  
 Dhyānpati nām tānka dilā Gurujan. 119.  
 Sehi din dhari Dheli Barā Hindu bhailā:  
 Ahamśavar madhye tāhāk rākhilā.  
 Adyāpi tāhār vaṃśa āchay aihit:  
 Dheli Barā ghar buli savate vidit. 120.  
 Pañcadaśa sata trayaviṃśa Māgh mās:  
 Sehi din hante dharma karila prakāś. 121.

Aniruddha died on a Monday on the tenth day of the bright moon, on the eleventh day of Pauṣ in Śāka 1548 corresponding to 1626 A.D. His name is certainly of much more than mere religious or literary importance. Sir Gait writes of him: "The Bamunia Gosains had one Sūdra rival in upper Assam in the person of Anirodh, a Kalita by caste. This man quarrelled with Śaṅkardeb and leaving him, founded the Moamaria sects, the adherents of which were destined to play an important part in the downfall of Ahom rule." (H.A., 2nd Ed., p. 59). This is a partial view of the truth and is founded on the wrong and malicious information supplied by *Ādi Caritra*, a spurious work in the name of Mādhawdew. Many stories have since been invented to blacken the pure name of this sect of Vaiṣṇavas who are really Māyāmarā, but are nicknamed Moāmariā. That the real word is 'Māyā' (illusion) which Aniruddha is said to have specially controlled, appears from various references. Aniruddha hesitated to assume religious leadership saying that he was under the control of Māyā, as he had to mind his secular work as a ruling chief; but Gopāl Ātā told him that he must be a preacher and then Māyā shall be under his control instead:

"Madhumatī Māyā śire cari āche mor:  
 Napārōho ehi bākya karibe Gurur." 101  
 "Madhumatī Māyār śirat tumi cari:  
 Mardīā Māyāk thākā dharmak ācari.' 104

The Mayamara rebellion, a people's movement, which is really the most important and interesting event in the whole history of Assam, is perhaps a good deal responsible for malicious propaganda against this sect.

Aniruddha's renderings of the Bhāgawat and Mahābhārat are assigned to the last decade of the sixteenth century. His songs, indeed



RATNAKAR MISRA is another poet that appears in the colophons from verses 3583-4283 beginning with "Prithur vaṃśa Barṇan" and ending with Book Four. Let us first of all see if we can gather anything about him from his colophons and autobiographical notes that are:

Atrir gr̥hat khyāt: Viṣṇu vaṃśe bhailā jāt.  
 Sehi māne nam yār: Dviṇa kule janma sār. 3758  
 Śrī pūrvak dewa ante: Viracilo sito sante.  
 Auniātīt bās: Govindat yār ās. 3759.  
 Miśra Ratnākar, Kṛṣṇar kinkar, āk padavandhe bhane. 3807  
 Dviṇa Ratnākar Miśra, tariba saṃsār kricchva.  
 Kṛṣṇa pād-padme thaiā citta. 42664  
 Ratnākar Miśra viracila Haridhyān. 4296.

To read between the lines of verse 3759, was he Viṣṇu Bhārati and a resident of Auniati? The works *Brahma-Gīta* and *Gītā-Kīrttan* are also attributed to Ratnākar Miśra.

Book Five of the Bhāgawāt contains colophons of Aniruddha Kāyastha alone with many important autobiographical notes as the following:

Pāche daiva gati āsi Kṛṣṇar kṛpāt:  
 Nāmat Śaṅkardew janmilā sāksāt. 4303.  
 Āchil Mādhawdew tāna mukhva siṣya:  
 Param Vaisnaw sito pandit biśiṣṭa. 4305  
 Nakarilā bihā kari indriya nigrāh:  
 Sambandhat āmār kaṇiṣṭha pitāmāh. 4306.  
 Pancam Skandhar, kathā manohar, ehimāne samāpati:  
 Kato samksepiā, kato bistāria, kailō yena lailā mati 5170  
 Nrpa Raghubar, param sundar, rūpe Kāmdew sama....  
 Tāna mukhyatam, bisvās param, Kāvastha dalar pati:  
 Gurur carane, padacay bhane, Aniruddha śiśumati:  
 Veda pakṣa bān, śaśānke śakar, Āswīn Kṛṣṇa pakṣat:

This clears, above other points, that Aniruddha was a near relation of Mādhawdew, that Aniruddha was a leader of the Kāyasthas, and, perhaps while at Bhavānipur in Kāmṛūp, completed this work in Śaka 1525 corresponding to 1603 A.D.

First part of Book Six of the Bhāgawāt, beginning with *Ajāmīl Upākhyān* contains the colophon of Śaṅkardew while the latter part including *Bṛttāsūr Badh* contains the colophons of Ananta Kandali whose most comprehensive genealogy in an autobiographical note is found here (vs. 6026-37). This shows that Sāgar Dviṇa was Ananta Kandali's earliest ancestor residing at Rautā where Śaṅkardew and other Bāra Bhuyās lived for some time. His two sons were Candra Kandali and Ratna Bhārati. In the Dihingia Bandha, through which the Kapili and Gangā flow, lived Bāni Thakur whose three sons were Candibar, Sambhu and Dhvaja. Dhvaja married Vanamālā, the

daughter of Candra Kandali at Rautā, which village was subsequently damaged. Then they came to Hājo. There Dhvaja alias Padma Mandal became renowned as Ratna Pāthak who read nicely and one Ratna Bhārati explained the scriptures. To Ratna Pathak and Vanamala were born four sons Haricarai, Rām, Acyut and Yadumani. Haricarai Ananta Kandali, the eldest was given the name Candra Bhārati by one Śiva Mandal.

GOVINDA MISRA who rendered the Gīta into Assamese verse was also a scholar in Sanskrit who wrote his work by consulting all available commentaries on it as may be understood from the following:

Śaṅkarī Bhāskari, matak aloci, tikā cāi Hanumanta:  
 Ānanda Girir, tikā ye Svāmīr, diuro jijnāsi mata.  
 Panca tikā cāi yimāne bujilō, mati anusāre lailō.

Very little is known about this writer from his personal writing. He is said to be an inhabitant of a village, Bali, in Kāmrup, his father being one Tārāpati, grandfather Kalācandra, great grandfather of Rām Miśra. (D.C.A.M., p. 53). He possessed considerable poetic gift also, as may be gathered from his rendering as a whole.

GOPINATH DVIJA, son of Rām Saraswatī II, was an inhabitant of Chinkona Patcaurā, now identified with Patchārkuchi in Darrang. Gopinath Dvija wrote his works on *Sabhā Parva*, *Drona Parva* and *Svargārohan Parva Mahābhārat* under the patronage of Darangi Rajā Dharma Nārāyaṇ (1615-37), like his father, under the name Gopinath Dvija (or Gopinath Pathak?). He was a poet of considerable merit.

BHAGAWAT MISRA is the author of the two verse-renderings, *Viṣṇu Purāṇ* and *Sātvata Tantra*. He is said to be the son of one Hari Miśra and a disciple of Haridewa (1493-1571). In a discourse between Nārada and Mahādew, the glory of love of God has been thus described in the *Sātvata Tantra*. Another work *Samśār*, describing the virtues and vices of the world, is also attributed to this author, containing the colophon.

Save sabhāsada loka, sāvadhāne śunioka  
 Dūrkarā adharmat rati:  
 Pātakar dhumketu nibandhibō śāstra hetu  
 Bhāgawat Miśra alpa mati.

VISNU BHARATI, the author of *Dhruva Carit* and *Bhāgawat-Ratna*, is little known save by the following autobiographical note of his second work:

Dvādaś Skandhar kathā sūtra anusari:  
 Yi ādhyāt yena kathā āche byākhyā kari.  
 Tāhāk sūcai yāibō prathamā hante:  
 Yihetu āmāk bole anek mahante.

Śrīdhar Svāmīr sankā ślok anubandhe;  
 Viracibō sūtra kathā param pravandhe.  
 Sunā mahajansave gocar āmār:  
 Ito śāstra khāni hauk lokat pracār.  
 Bhāgawat Ratna nāme Bhāgawat tattva;  
 Ihāk jānile jānibeka Bhagawata.  
 Alpa bhāve howe yadi bahumūlya ratna:  
 Śrī Viṣṇu Bhārati uddhārīlā kari yatna

CLOSE OF THE TIDE: VAIKUNTHA BHATTADEW (? 1558-? 1638) who won other titles as Kaviratna and Bhāgawat Bhattācārya, was the second son of Kavi Saraswati and grandson Candra Bhārati (neither Aniruddha Ram Saraswati nor Haricaran Ananta Kandali, the illustrious poets, who had such titles), who resided in a village Bhara of Barnagar. Rāmcaran's account (vs. 3111-36) shows that Vaikuṇṭhanāth was at first a Tāntric and anti-Vaiṣṇavite, but was influenced by Śaṅkardew's personality. Vaikuṇṭhanāth then sought initiation from Śaṅkardew himself, but the latter sent him to Dāmodardew saying that there was little difference between himself and Dāmodar. So he came to be initiated by Dāmodardew.

Rāmraī's *Dāmodar Guru Līlā* gives a slightly different version and says that Vaikuṇṭhanāth went direct to Dāmodardew for initiation, from Vijay Nagar, which Hemcandra Goswami identifies with rather present Bijni State than with Bar Nagar (Preface to *Katha-Gīta*) which sounds reasonable. When king Raghudew (1581-1603) died and his son Parikṣit Nārāyan (1603-13), who now came to the throne, began to oppress the Vaiṣṇavas and arrested Dāmodardew also, for being anti-ritualistic, the latter left his Satra in charge of Vaikuṇṭhanāth with further advice to translate the Bhāgawat into Assamese prose referring respectfully to Śaṅkardew's renderings in verse:

Āru eka jagat-Īswar ājnā dharā:  
 Kathā bandhe ek khaṇḍa Bhāgawat karā.  
 Pūrve Mahāpuruṣe karile daśa skandha:  
 Kīrttan Bhatimā Chabi Dulari sucanda. 338  
 Tāta kari sugam kario Bhāgawata:  
 Śrī-Śūdra sarvaloke bujhe yena mata. 339.

Vaikuṇṭhanātha abided and finished the work. Hemcandra Goswami gives the year of Raghudew's death and his son Parikṣit's ascension to the throne as 1515 Śaka or 1593 A.D. and assigns the period 1593-97 as the period of composition of the Bhāgawat (Preface to *kathā-Gīta*), which according to Sir Gait must be 1603-07 A.D. Dāmodardew was asked to leave his country by king Parikṣit Nārāyan within a year, and so the next year Dāmodardew came to the country of king Lakshmi Narayan (1584-1622) on the west bank of the Sonkoṣ river. At the

time of crossing the river, Vaikuṇṭhanāth is said to have shown Dāmodardew his first book of the Bhāgawat who saw that he not only translated the text but also did the commentaries, which made the work so bulky. Dāmodardew then advised Vaikuṇṭhanāth to make the work more concise. Dāmodardew then left for Koc Behar and Vaikuṇṭhanāth returned to Patbausi where he must have completed this work in about four years. So it was in the last decade of the sixteenth or in the first decade of the seventeenth century that the prose Gīta of Vaikuṇṭhanāth was completed. There is nothing to inform us as to the exact date of composition of the *Kathā Gītā*, but that he began it soon after the composition of the *Kathā Bhāgawat*, can be gathered from the idea of Rāmrai's work.

Besides these two works, Vaikuṇṭhanāth is known to have rendered *Bhakti Ratnāwali* and *Sātvata Tantra* into Assamese prose. He also compiled three works in Sanskrit, namely, *Bhakti-Sār*, *Bhakti Vivek*, and *Saran-Sangrah* which further prove his scholarship. Two other works, *Prasanga Mālā* and *Guru-Vamsāwali* in Assamese verse, more or less, of sectarian type, are also attributed to him.

**LAST FLOWER OF RENASCENCE:** Bhattadew was the last great Vaiṣṇavite writer of genius whose contributions give him a unique place in the history of literature. True it is that Assamese prose began about a century before him. Contention that the drama prose was artificial and so much mixed with Vrajabuli, also does not hold good, since Vaikuṇṭhanāth's prose is also artificial with such forms as "karanta", "jāwanta", etc., which could never have been in daily use even in those days. So while there is no room for ascribing anything as 'invention' to Assamese prose by him, he must at least be credited with using Assamese prose as a regular vehicle for essays and for making the vehicle popular enough for the use of his posterity.

From Vaikuṇṭhanāth's first prose work, *Kathā Bhāgawat*, Book Seven, Chapter Six, Prahlād giving instructions to the fellow-children of the demons, about love of God, we quote the following, which has an echo in it of the prose-speeches of Śaṅkardew and Mādhawdew, though not so mixed with Vrajabuli:

"Prahlaḍe kahanta: He Daitya bālaka sava: buddhiwanta jane chawāla kālare parā Harit bhakti karok. Yato durlabha manuṣya janma ketikṣaṇe pare tār thān-thiti nāi. Eteke jānibā: puruṣar Hari sewāyese kartabya. Yato Hari savāre ātmā priya suhrid: biṣay sukh punu sakal yonite pāy: yene nukhujileo dukh mile, temane sukh miliba. Eteke sukhar arthē yatna karok. Yāto āyu bifale nayāi: yāto śarīr baikala natu howe, tāwe Hari sewāk lāgi yatna karok: Puruṣar śatek batsar paramāyu: tār ardhek nidrāt bifale yāy: bālak kālat krīrha kariteo kuri bastar yāy: Pāche jarā awasthāto kuri bastar yāy: Mājhar āyuo



biṣay karite bifale yāy: Kon no puruṣa gṛhat thāki dhan-janat āsakti kari āpuṇāk mukta kariba. Eteke torā savāre sanga eri Nārāyaṇak bhajā: tāhānte priti karite kicho prayāsnāi. Yāto Hari savāre Ātmā, savāte pāy: Torāo sakal prāṇik dayā karibā. Teve alpa kālāte Hari tuṣṭa haiba. Hari tuṣṭa haile puruṣar sakal puruṣārtha aprāpya nahe. Tathāpi ekānta Bhaktar tāt kicho proyoyan nāi. Ei jñān kathā pūrvaṭ Nārāyaṇe Nāradaṭ kahilā; mayo Nāradaṭ mukhe sunilo; ehi jñān Hari ekānta Bhaktar pada-ranu laile savāre haiba."

'Prahlaḍ says, 'O Daitya boys, let the intelligent people be devoted to God since childhood, since there is no certainty as to when this human life, so hard to acquire, finishes. So do know that it is the duty of men to serve God, since He is the dear intimate friend and soul of all, and wordly pleasures are available in any animal life. As miseries come even unasked, so happiness will also come. So make efforts to attain happiness. So that the life may not end in smoke, in order that the body be not tottering yet, till then may men strive to serve God. Men's duration of life is one hundred years. Half of it goes in sleep for nothing. Twenty years also pass in sports of childhood. Then another twenty years go in the infirmities of age. The duration in between them passes in worldly affairs for nothing. What man is there who can free himself remaining addicted to wealth and people at home? So do ye dedicate yourselves to God cutting off connections with all these. To love Him there is no trouble. Since God is the soul of all, available everywhere, ye too show love to all beings. Then God will be pleased in no time. If God is pleased, men's all efforts (Virtue, wealth, desire, salvation) cannot be unattained. Yet selfless devotees feel no need of them. This wisdom was first given to Narada by Narayana. Myself have heard it from Nārada. This wisdom shall come to all who take the dusts of feet of Hari's selfless devotees'.

Vaikuṇṭhanāth, in his second prose work, *kathā-Gītā*, writes about the commentaries he uses: "Yadyapi āmi Śrī Kṛṣṇar prasāde Śrīdharī Śaṅkarī Dāmodarī Bhāskarī cārio tikā bicār karicō, tathāpi prāy Śrīdharī tikār mate kathā nivandhibō: tāhār yukti śunā. Śaṅkarī tikā Jñānak pradhān kari byākhyā kare: Bhāskarī karmak pradhān kare: Śrīdharī bhakti mātra nirūpaṇ kare: Dāmodarī tinio yog sama kahe. Eteke Vaiṣṇav savar prītir arthe bhaktipradhān tīkar mātaka prāy likhibo. Bhaktir anukul dekhi kicho kicho tārār mātako nivandhibo. Jñān karma rakhitese Śaṅkarī Bhāskarī bibād, bhakti kicho bibād nakariche: Eteke Bhaktipantha savaro sammāt."

'Although by the grace of Śrī Kṛṣṇa I have inquired into the four commentaries Śrīdharite, Śaṅkarite, Dāmodarite and Bhāskarite, yet I shall write mostly according to Śrīdharite commentary. Hear the reasons. The Śaṅkarite commentary interprets giving predominance to knowledge, the Bhāskarite to rituals, the Śrīdharite to devotion, and the Dāmodarite to all as equal. So for the satisfaction of the Vaisnavas I shall mainly write according to the cult predominating devotion. When found favourable for devotion, I shall include some opinions of the others also. The Śaṅkarite and Bhāskarite commentaries dispute only on predominance of knowledge or of rituals. They do not question devotion at all. So the cult of devotion is agreed upon by all.'

**DEVELOPMENT OF ASAMIYĀ PROSE:** In the second chapter of the *Kathā-Gītā* where Kṛṣṇa puts forth reasons after reasons why Arjuna must fight, Vaikuntha writes: "Sanjaye kahanta: ei bākya Govindaka buli Gurhakeśa Arjun nujujhim buliā mauna rahila. Hrishikesh Bhagavanto hāsya badane dehātmā bibhed dekhāi tāhān moh dūr karite ei bākya bulilā: 'He sakhi Arjun, tumi śokar abiṣay bandhusavak śok karā: tāt mai bodh dileo paṇḍit savar bādsav kāhā; tumi punu pandit nahawā: yi punu pandit hay si jīvanta maranta duiko śok nakare. Tār hetu śunā: yen mai anādi Iswar līlā tanu dharite erhiteo nāika naho, kintu sadāye thākō. Tumi ei Rajāsavo mor aṃśa pade nāikā nahawā: kintu satate thākā. Paramārthat janma maraṇ nāi nimitte śok nakaribā. Yadi bolā, tumi Iswarar janma maraṇ nāi: E satya hay: jīwar punu janma maraṇ prasiddha āche: tāta śunā. Yen dehī puruṣar ei dehate deh nivandhan kaumār yauvan jarā awasthā hay, dehāntar prāptiko temane bujhibā. Eteke yi dhīr hay, si dehar utpatti bināśat moh nayāy. Yadi bolā mai bandhusavak śok nakarō, kintu tārāt biyoge duhkha pāibō buli āpunāko śok karō, tāta śunā. Yen anitya asthir biṣay sambandhasav svabhāwe puruṣak śīt uṣma sukh dukh dei, tāk sahan dhīrar ucit hay, pratikār karaṇato kari mahāfal sādhe pade sahanese bhāla dekhā.'

'Sanjaya related, 'Saying these words to Govinda Arjuna maintained silence being determined not to fight. Kṛṣṇa, with a smiling face, in order to remove his illusion by showing him the difference between the body and the soul, said, 'O my friend, Arjuna, you grieve for friends who (in reality) are not to be grieved for. When I give you sense against it, you put forth opinions of scholars. And you are not (yourself) a scholar. And he who is a scholar never grieves for the living and the dead alike. Listen to the reasons thereof. For instance, I who am God having no origin: whether I hold or give up this illusory body, I do not cease to live, but I always exist. Yourself and these kings being parts of myself can (similarly) never cease to live, but shall ever exist. In the spiritual sense, there is no birth or death, hence grieve not. If you would argue, 'Thou art God; thou hast no birth or death, it is true: but birth and death of all beings are well known: 'Hear my reply thereto. As bodied people experience childhood, youth and old age in the same body, do appreciate change of body (death) in the same way. So he who is wise can never be deluded by the emergence or annihilation of the body. If you would still argue: 'I do not grieve (for) my friends: I grieve for myself thinking that their separation will pain me': hear my reply thereto. As ephemeral and fleeting things by their very nature inflict the sensations of coolness and heat, pleasure and pain, and toleration of them befits the wise, (so) you see that to put up with them is better, since worthier fruits can be plucked by it, than by attempting at any remedy.'

This shows how in the hands of Vaikunṭhanāth the Assamese prose was fast becoming a more useful but simple and strong vehicle of thought.

**MOMENTUM OF THE TIDE:** The Vaiṣṇavite movement thus had a momentum of unusual magnitude. As a matter of fact, this is the movement of Assamese life and literature that knows no comparison. As a period, it covers almost the whole history of Assamese literature, at least from the twelfth century when the literature, properly so called, itself begins. And where it actually ends, no one knows yet. Even if there have been many fresh knocks at the door, it is not yet opened. There is no newer charm as "open sesame" to unlock the hearts of the Assamese mass after the one uttered by Śaṅkardew five hundred years back. Even today there are no poets dearer to their hearts than Śaṅkardew, Mādhawdew, Ananta Kandali, Śrīdhara Kandali, Rām Saraswatī and others. They are the friends, philosophers and guides for ever of the Assamese mass, and their adoration of Śaṅkardew verge in their worship of him as God incarnate, far above the ordinary run of people.

The reason why this movement was so extremely popular with the mass is that it was, as a matter of fact, a movement for them, if not by them, accelerated by a few of the intellectual and privileged class, the average members of which made them victims of their own selfishness to the extreme. On the other hand, their self-conceit and hypocrisy reached such a stage that this old order was compelled to change "yielding place to new". Through this new movement, people could see the hollowness of their earlier spiritual guides, so called, and their moral bankruptcy. So they would no sooner find an opportunity than throw away the yoke of slavishness.

Like the French Revolution of centuries behind, liberty, equality and fraternity were the watch-words of the neo-Vaiṣṇavite movement, but on a spiritual plane. Every man is free, and not subordinate to any class of people, by his birth. He is equal to any other man in capacities and may be superior or inferior only by his good or evil deed. Men are all brothers being children of one God who is the Father. These are the ideas that pervade the whole Vaiṣṇavite literature and they stimulated the society and stirred it into action. The depressed and the down-trodden now felt their infinite goodness and greatness that lay dormant and suppressed in them. Self-confidence and courage were aroused in every soul, and each felt a stirring of new life.

As the same soil of England, in the Eliztbethan period, produced Bacon in Science, Hooker in religion and Shakespeare in literature, so the same environment of the Vaiṣṇavite age fostered the growth of Bakul Kāyastha in arithmetic, Purushottama Vidyābāgi in Sanskrit grammar, Curāmaṇi in astrology and Śaṅkardew in religion and literature. The characteristic that is commonly shared by them is a buoyancy

of spirit, the very stuff of youth that vibrated in every heart in the country. Though the glorious dynasty of Narakasur and Bhagadatta became practically extinct, the new lines of kings as the Ahoms and Koches that now appeared in the field were charged with all the freshness of youth and so were the people. The Ahoms of the Shan tribe, that were so few in number, peeped in through the eastern gate and like the young sun became more and more powerful as it scaled the horizon. So on the west, Visva Simha who started as a petty chief, overflowed the horizon with silver light, as the full moon that makes a humble beginning. Thus the country in the Vaiṣṇavite age began with the spirit of adolescence in every field and finished with the experience of adults. This is the very key to the great Vaiṣṇavite age.

They are casual or superficial observers who think that the Vaiṣṇavite age sheltered all dreamers and all the weak and indolent drones. Far from it. The Vaiṣṇavite learning, on the other hand, emphasises on "mukhe Rām nām, hāte kṛta kām"; it asks man to live in the world like a lotus-leaf, that lives in water but is never wet by it, with heart to God and hands to work. In a word, it urges man to be dutiful both to the world and God, but insists on being disinterested; for we must discharge our worldly duties for their own sake and love God for Love's sake. So the Vaiṣṇavite period proper was a period of peace and plenty, the like of which we know not. With a religious vow, it has yet a mundane vigour and vitality. Even a great preacher and poet like Mādhawdew himself carried on commerce in between Narayanpur in the extreme east of Assam and Bāṇḍukā in West Assam then, in his early days. Another greatest and most favourite disciple of Śaṅkardew, Narayan Thakur, was a big merchant indeed.

**THE MAYAMARA REBELLION:** Those who would think that such a radical religious movement touching the hearts of kings and people alike was bound to weaken the vitality of the nation, are warned by the living facts of the great Māyāmarā rebellion, something like the peasants rebellion in England, that soon followed. The Vaiṣṇavite movement awakened the middle class and the lower class in particular, as in the great Elizabethan period in England. They now became self-conscious and could not be used as mere tools in the hands of those who victimised them earlier. They were now no longer dumb millions. In religion too they saw they could work out their own salvation, and needed no profiteers or middlemen. They would now never believe in the divine right either of their spiritual masters or of temporal lords. They found themselves and saw that they were no negligible units in the kingdom of God and Man. Because they were made to realise that they were true servants of God, they got the mastery of themselves now; and

thus it is the height of folly to think that this made the nation tame and docile or slavish in daily life.

In spite of the avowed religious character of the Vaiṣṇavite literature, it had a perfect and overwhelming human interest. Though the vast majority of writings were rendered from Sanskrit works as the Ramayana, Mahabharat, Bhagawat and the Gītā, they were no word-for-word translations; but were rather original in some broad sense. It is this thorough and broad human sympathy and interest that brings this Vaiṣṇavite literature so near the hearts of the people.

One may wonder what charm this neo-Vaiṣṇavite movement must have known in order to be so cordial with the people. The insincerity and hypocrisy in the manners of the earlier spiritual guides, were bound to defeat their own purpose. On the other hand, the neo-Vaiṣṇavite movement inaugurated by Śaṅkardew was so simple and transparent and so thoroughly informed with sincerity and plainness that people found in this new move not only some relief but also some antidote to the very diseases and canker of the society. To sum up, self-purification was the motto of this new faith, and it re-acted on the self-conceit of the prevailing religion or irreligion. Rituals or worship of God in unintelligible words or assurance of bliss after death could no longer satisfy people. A pious life with clear moral conduct was what was in demand, and they know it from Śaṅkardew's own family life. This gave the society a chance to rectify itself and it soon restored a general moral tone. This shows the thoroughness of the movement.

Besides overhauling the society with self-purification, the neo-Vaiṣṇavite literature ushered in a new spirit of national consciousness to the Assamese people who were hopelessly scattered. Besides about half a dozen political powers of different raciality and culture like the Cūtīyās, Bārahuyāns, Kachāris, Āhoms and Koces contending for supremacy, there were the surrounding hill tribes as the Daflas, Miris, Mikirs, and so forth, that might devour the culture, to leave alone the Muhamadans who were now on the gate and launched as many as seventeen attacks in all. It is sheer lack of wisdom to think that the Assamese could have kept their culture and civilisation in tact even if we take for granted, as many argue, that they existed as such even before Śaṅkardew. It is perhaps this movement alone that united Asam with the rest of India so closely till comparatively recent times.

THE ASSAMESE RENAISSANCE is but the Indian Renaissance with a tinge of local hue, and the period exactly synchronised with the Vaiṣṇavite period. Undoubtedly the country of Prāgjyotiṣa or Kāmarūpa had a culture of her own, but no distinct shape of it is found. Some pre-

Vaiṣṇavite literature and institutions give a visionary impression of pre-Śaṅkarite Assamese culture. But even these materials were remodelled by Śaṅkardew who built everything anew. So in music and art, in literature and culture, and in national life and spirit we find the country, after Śaṅkardew quite new and different from the country before Śaṅkardew, like England before and after Christianity. Thus the people saw a new and vast horizon opened up before them by the great spiritual vision of Vaiṣṇavism, and also by the intellectual vision opened up by the conquests of both the Ahom kings and the Koc kings, though at first antagonistic but in the long run intermingling and blending into one. The main power that cemented the temporary split once more was of course the Vaiṣṇavite culture, and so Assamese culture remains till to-day one and the same from Sadia to Rungpur and Koc Behar.

Such was the enthusiasm of the period that even illiteracy was no bar to the spread of culture. So suitable was the literature of the period, so it touched the heart of the mass people, so simple and sweet was the composition, that the hungry hearts of the people devoured them outright, as their thirsty souls drank the nectar of divine love. Even today one may come across thousands and thousands of Assamese men and women who will recite the entire Kavyas like *Kāṅkhowa*, *Bhīm Carit*, *Gurumālā*, but who, curious enough, are not acquainted with even the first letter of Assamese alphabet. And this is no mere cramming, for most of them breathe in the atmosphere created by these works. Even where there is not a single literate person in the family, the Nāmghars or prayer-houses are there in each village and even in each neighbourhood where the people themselves read and discuss these things in every religious occasion, if not every evening.

It may be that unlike the Elizabethan period in England it was a purely religious movement and hence it could encourage no secular progress; but as in all great religious movements, it achieved material progress without having a material tendency. This fact is evidenced by any history. Every great religion comes to liberate mind (soul) from the bondage of matter, thus allowing a free play of atomic energy that makes itself felt far beyond the pale of religious circles. So it was in pro-Buddhistic and pro-Gupta India, and as it was in pro-Śaṅkardew Assam. It is due to the fact that neo-Vaiṣṇavism by being ushered in came like a ray of hope in the darkness of ignorance. People heaved a sigh of relief on being freed from the abuses of religion, removing the canker of society, and the time they could find was utilised for their material progress. The examples of king Nara Nārāyaṇ and his General Cilarai may suffice. They were very highly

inspired by the teachings of Śaṅkardew, being themselves good Sanskrit scholars studying at Benares. Their zeal for material progress was no less proverbial than their virtues or religious leanings.

Like the Elizabethan literature, which it resembles in so many ways, the Vaiṣṇavite literature is positive and free from lassitude. It is practical in the sense that it has a definite aim in view and a sure goal, within its spiritual sphere, to reach. No lethargy of heart nor any doubt of mind ever broods over it. It opens into the infinite space or Bhūmā and into infinite bliss or union with God. The whole Vaiṣṇavite literature is informed with one and the same message, namely divine love. The Vaiṣṇavite poets, themselves intoxicated, would offer to every lip the nectar of divine love with all sincerity and confidence.

Exactly like the material aggrandisements of king Nara Nārāyan with his General Cilarai on the west, and the Ahom rulers on the east, in the same country, there were intellectual aggrandisements in the field of literature, which was so long occupied by the harvest of poetry and songs alone. The first diversion therefore was Śaṅkardew's creation of the Assamese drama which fast became a very useful organ of preaching and very important contribution to literature. The next invention also of Śaṅkardew himself was the Assamese prose style first confined to the drama alone and then used and developed by Vaikunṭhānāth Bhattadew to separate treatises and discourses as the *Kathā Bhāgawat* and *Kathā Gītā*, nearly one century after Śaṅkardew. The Bar Gits, decidedly a definite improvement in Assamese music and songs, as it was in poetry, and other songs as Totay and Bhattimā, are other extensions in the intellectual domain of literature.

The message of Śaṅkardew's *Eka-Śaraṇ* (Self-surrender to the One) used to reach far beyond the bounds within which they used teach and preach. Jaymati's martyrdom, for instance, for the welfare of the country and against the abuse of royal power, is a clear example of the propagation of *Eka-Śaraṇ*. Lācit Phukan, the illustrious hero of Śarāi Ghāt battles, also illustrates the same fact. No doors are totally shut against the warmth of the sun. And this movement keeps the warmth of the living for the Assamese national life for these five centuries.



## BOOK FIVE

### POST-RENAISSANCE ASSAMIYĀ LITERATURE

#### I. THE PRELIMINARY FACTS OF THE PERIOD

**POLITICAL SUMMARY:** This period synchronises with the fall of the Mughal Empire in Indian history and the decline of the Ahom kingdom in the State of Assam as also with the gradual spread of the British Empire in India. The great Koc kingdom in the western part of old Kāmarūp had already collapsed as also the Chutiya and Kachāri kingdoms. The period begins with the reign of Sutāmlā or Jayadhwaj (1648-63) on the Ahom throne. He was preceded by two very weak kings, namely Suramfa, nicknamed the Deposed King (1641-44), and Sutyinfa, nicknamed the Crooked or the Sick King (1644-48). In 1658, the Mughal Emperor, Shāhjeḥan, fell ill and both the Koch King, Prāṇ Nārāyaṇ, and the Ahom King, Jayadhwaj, wanted to avail themselves of this opportunity against their common foe. Prāṇ Nārāyaṇ proposed friendly alliance with Jayadhwaj requiring the latter to help him to throw off the yoke of the Mughal Emperor; but the latter rejected the offer forthwith on reviewing his past conduct. On the other hand, Jayadhwaj marched against the Koces, and the Mughals conquered the territory of the former, and plundered and laid waste the country to the south of it (the Brahmaputra valley) "almost as far as Dacca itself" according to the Ālamgir-nāmāḥ quoted by Gait (*History of Assam*, p. 128), when the Muhammadan Fauzadar fled to Dacca leaving a fair number cannons, guns and horses as booties to the Ahoms. "For the flight of Prince Shuja to Arakan, Mir Jumla was made Viceroy of Bengal and he presently set out against Prāṇ Nārāyaṇ only to find the latter flying to Bhutān". On January 4, 1662, Mir Jumla led his expedition against the Ahom, with Portuguese and others European officers in charge of his fleet and Mir Jumla was driven out with great difficulty on March 30, 1663. (*Neog's Introduction to Assam*, pp. 109-14). Jayadhwaj was succeeded by Supungmung, assuming the Hindu name Cakradhwaj (1663-69), and in February, 1669, the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb (1608-1707) despatched a monster army under Ram Singh to conquer Assam. The latter was of course defeated and repulsed in the April of the year. Then the reigns of other kings followed, the last Muhammadan invasion being crushed in 1682 by Gadādhara Siphā (1681-96). The close of the seventeenth and the dawn of the eighteenth century saw the greatest



of the Ahom Kings, Rudra Siṃha (1696-1714) who made a farther attempt to restore the old kingdom of Kāmarūpa ruled by the great kings of the Naraka line in the past. He re-annexed the Kachari and the Jayantiya kingdoms and held a great durbar with those kings in a tent supported by posts of gold and silver. Like the Koc general, Cilārāi, Rudra Siṃha also arranged to invade the Mughal territory of Bengal, but it was frustrated by his illness to which he succumbed in August, 1714, at Gauhati. He was succeeded by his son Siva Siṃha, who was a weakling, and by several other weak rulers who paved the downward slope to the fall of the Ahom kingdom, sheltering the Māyamarā rebellions and the Burmese invasions. The treaty of Yāṇḍābu on 24th February, 1826, by which Asam passed miraculously into the hands of the British, was the last nail in the coffin of Asam's independence.

**THE MAYAMARA REBELLION:** It was observed in passing that the authorities, both secular and religious, could not look upon the advent of neo-Vaiṣṇavite movement without misgiving. Not only did the Brahmin priesthood themselves oppose the movement, they left no opportunity to instigate the secular authorities against it, with the result that Śaṅkardew and his followers had to seek shelter in the court of the Koc King Nar Nārāyaṇ, where also they were not quite safe. Gadādhara Siṃha (1681-96), who was a patron of Śāktism, persecuted the Vaiṣṇava preachers in a manner which led Sir Gait to remark: "It is impossible to justify or palliate the brutal severity of the measures which he adopted with a view to overthrow the Vaiṣṇava sects." (p. 170). His son Rudra Siṃha (1696-1714), the greatest Ahom monarch as we have called him, was not without his share of idiosyncracies, and was perhaps mainly responsible for one of the gravest blunders which has far-reaching consequences in Assamese national life. Increase of Hindu proclivities in his old age culminated in his resolve to formally embrace Hinduism, but he could not bear the thought of prostrating himself as a neophyte before one of his subjects, however godly, as his preceptor. Thus it was that in one of his whims he summoned one Kṛṣṇa-rām Bhattācārya, a Śākta Mahanta of Bengal; and when the latter arrived, the king changed his mind and sent the Mahanta back to Bengal by a second whim; an earthquake in the meantime shattered many buildings including temples, in Asam, and the king being interpreted this natural phenomenon as owing its origin to the Mahanta's wrath, called him by a third whim, and hesitating this time also, ordered, however, his sons and his Brahmin Officers to become his disciples. Siva Siṃha (1714-44) who succeeded his father, was initiated by Kṛṣṇarām, the latter being not only put in the

management of the Kāmākhyā temple in the Nila hill at Gauhati, but being also given large grants of land in different parts of Asam which his successors have still been enjoying. Thus it is that almost all the Śāktas of Asam are disciples of these foreign Mahantas, since known as Parvatiyā Gosāis. To quote Sir Gait, "Siva Singha was completely under the influence of the Brahmin priests and astrologers .... He declared his chief queen Phuleswari....to be the "Bar Raja" or chief king .... to make matters worse, Phulesvari's authority was far from nominal. She was even more under the influence of the Brahmans than her husband, and in her consuming zeal for Sakta Hinduism, such as so often distinguishes neophytes, she committed an act of oppression which was destined to have far-reaching and disastrous consequences. Hearing that the Sudra Mahants of the Vaiṣṇava persuasion refused to worship Durga, she ordered the Moamaria and several other Gosais to be brought to a Sakta shrine where sacrifices were being offered and caused the distinguishing mark of the Sakta sect to be besmeared with the blood of the victims upon their foreheads. The Moamarias never forgave this insult to their spiritual leader, and half a century later, they broke out in open rebellion." (p. 180). As the Vaiṣṇavite movement is the only intellectual movement that stirred the mass people of Asam in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, so also the Māyāmarā (nicknamed Moāmariā) rebellion is the only socio-political movement in the whole history of Asam, made for the people and by the people. The royalists and kings were driven from pillar to post, till king Gauri Sipa (1780-95) was driven to seek help of the British through Lord Cornwallis (1786-93), and this first relation with the British soon changed the whole course of the history of Assam.

**DEVELOPMENTS IN PROSE:** This period at once coincides with the period of Restoration (1660-1700) and eighteenth century literature (1700-1800) of English Restoration period. We find here an age of transition from the exuberance and vigour of Renaissance literature to the formality and polish in literature. "The old Elizabethan spirit, with its patriotism, its creative vigour, its love of romance, and the Puritan spirit with its moral earnestness and individualism, were both things of the past; and at first there was nothing to take their places." Creative geniuses of the highest rank like Śaṅkardew, Mādhawdew, Rām Saraswatī, Ananta Kandali and others in poetry and drama, and even Bhattadeva in prose having departed, the fertility and productivity of the soil itself having been exhausted in the last great harvest of Vaiṣṇavite literature, the soil or the age was almost barren; and only second class writers of Vaiṣṇavism were just keeping the cymbal. As also after Elizabethan literature of England, poetry no longer consti-

tuted the glory of Assamese literature of this period. But by nature's law of compensation, what it lost in depth, is gained in extension; and the loss is almost equal to the gain; for the development of Assamese prose in this period is almost unique. The Vaiṣṇavite prose, which was started about the close of the fifteenth century with the dramatic pieces of Śaṅkardew himself, was used almost as the only vehicle of preaching by Bhattadew and some others in the sixteenth century. The Tai invaders brought with them the practice of chronicling events, but the early ones were of course written in their own tongue. We do not yet exactly know when the first chronicles in Assamese were written by the Ahoms. The Assamese Buranji prose may be contemporaneous with the Vaiṣṇavite prose and may have since run on parallel lines, being sheltered by the royal courts and sacred Satras (monasteries). The difficulty about the Buranjis is that they do not, as a rule, bear the names of the authors and the dates of their compositions. We simply guess that the Tai speakers who married and settled in Assam took at least two to three centuries to pick up the local speech to write their chronicles in it. In between the religious Vaiṣṇavite poetry and prose and the secular historical prose of the Ahom court, we have the Vaiṣṇavite biographies and non-Vaiṣṇavite genealogies in prose and verse, besides the growing literature in different sciences, as contribution of this period.

## II. CONTINUATION OF RENAISSANCE LITERATURE

**RENDERING OF THE RAMAYANA:** The influence of the Vaiṣṇavite age is of such far-reaching consequences that, not to speak of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, we do not exactly know where to put the boundary line. But all the same, a limit after two centuries is shown as a matter of convention and convenience. This period is truly a continuation or extension of the last and will be treated as such. Ananta Kandali's rendering of the Rāmāyaṇa, in the latter part, has the following colophons:

"Kāyastha Hrdayānande kay: Śunioka sabhāsad cay."

"Aswa muni bān Candra śakat: Aghrāne dvitiya śukla pakṣat.  
Śrīrām Kīrttan bhaila upasām: Anante kahe bolā Rām Rām."

The word Ananta appearing in the second quotation naturally refers to the author. But could it mean Ananta Kandali himself? The quotation gives the exact date of completion of this work as the second day of the bright moon in the month of Agrahāyaṇ, of the year 1578 Saka or 1655. It is impossible that a contemporary of Śaṅkardew could survive still. The first colophon gives the name of one Hrdayānanda

Kāyastha as the author. Can these two names belong to one and the same person? Daityārī mentions the name of one Hṛdayānanda, son of Vyās Kalāi, who could read verses to the satisfaction of Śaṅkardew:

Āta pāche śunā, Vyās kalāir, yena bhaila bisangati:  
Hṛdayānanda nāme, tāhāna tanay, mahā dhīra śuddha mati.  
Mahā bicakṣaṇ, suṇdar śarīr, oṇā bar kīrttanar:  
Tente pad gānte, Śrīmanṭa Śaṅkare, ānanda labhe bistar. 1359.

It is also not possible that this junior contemporary of Śaṅkardew could be Hṛdayānanda Kāyastha who completed this rendering of the Rāmāyaṇa in 1655.

The genealogy of the Gosāis of Kālasilā Satra records:

"Jayscandra Khān, ye āchilanta Bhuyā, sarva guṇe anupām:  
Tāhān kaniṣṭha bhāi maha śiṣṭa, yār Sukavi Giri nām.  
Tāhān tanay, Yadu subhāṣay, guṇar nāhike anta....  
Śaṅkardewar, bhrātṛ ye kaniṣṭha, Hāthiā Dalai khyāt:  
Nāme Ratikānta, param Mahantā, Māhāntar samaṇyāt.  
Tāhān tanay, ati subhāṣay, Rāmcandra nām bhailā:  
Jiukhāni mātra, janmila tāhār eteke Vaikunthe gailā.  
Nātinikhānik, Ratikanta dewe, tulilanta sneh kari:  
Sukavir putrak, Yaduk āniā, bihāilanta yatna kari.  
Tāna garbha jāt, tini putra khyāt, Viṣṇur sewak bhailā:  
Cidānanda Nityānanda Kaniṣṭhar, Hṛdayānanda nām thailā.  
Hṛdayānandak, Ananta bolay, sarvaguṇe anupām:  
Bārādir hante, ujāne āsiā kaile āru nānā kām.  
Tehōje āsiā, Mayang rāṇyat kākṣilā grāme railā:  
Ati bhaiānak, bil khān tāt, sehi nāme grām bhailā.  
Premlatā āru, Rām ye kīrttan, dui śāstra karilanta:  
Sehi kāranat, Kālasilā Satre adyāpi kīrtti railanta."

This clearly speaks that Jaycandra Khān was a famous Bhūyā whose younger brother was Sukavi Giri. Sukavi Giri's son was Yadu who married Viṣṇupriyā, daughter of Rāmcandra who died after her birth and was brought up by Rām Candra's father, Ratikānta alias Hāthiā Dalai, grandson of Mādhaw, Sūryabar's younger brother who was Śaṅkardew's younger cousin. Viṣṇupriyā's three sons, all devoted to Viṣṇu, were Cidānanda, Nityānanda and Hṛdayānanda, the youngest, also called Ananta. He was at Bārādi near Barpeta and thence migrated to Māyang, in Naḡao and resided in a village, Kālasilā by name. There he wrote two works *Premlatā* and *Rām Kīrttan* which immortalise Kākṣilā.

HRDAYANANDA ALIAS ANANTA ĀTA, is the author of *Rām Kīrttan* or *Śrīram Kīrttan* and *Premlatā*, whose son Bhubaneswar is said to have received a grant of 700 puras of land from king Rājeswar Siṃha

(1751-60). Ananta Āta relates how he took the *Rāmāyaṇ Candrikā* of one Kalāp Candra Dvija as his model:

Sāt Kānda Rāmāyaṇ Valmikir kṛta:  
Tār sār uddhārila kariā bibṛta.  
Rāmāyaṇ Candrikā hailanta tār nām:  
Kalāp ye dvija candra Mahanta upām  
Kirttanar chande biracilō pad sār:  
Śrīrām Kirttan nām bujibā ihār.

Who was this Kalap candra whose model this writer followed? One, Kalāpcandra Dvija rendered parts of Bhāgawat Book Four and in it mentioned the name of king Nara Nārāyaṇ as his patron:

Jay Nar Nārāyaṇ: Dvija mārtaṇḍa yen. 2239  
Nirantar Brahma-jnānī: Nṛpatir curāmaṇi. 2243  
Tān prasādat mai: Racilō payārcay. 2244  
Badati Kalāpcandra: Bolā Rām Rām mantra. 2245.

This Kalapcandra then must be no other than Rām Saraswatī's son who also rendered the *Rādhā Caritra* in 315 verses, perhaps basing on the new *Brahma Baibartta Puran*, and Jaydew's *Gīta Govindam* which his father rendered into Assamese. In Kalap Candra's own colophons:

Śrī Rām Saraswatī, yār sadā śuddha mati,  
Bhāgawat śāstre yār ratī.  
Tāhān tanay ati, jñānsūnya alpa mati,  
Tathāpi karilō kono kam: 201

It may now seem confusion were confounded to bring Kalap Keśarī here, who according to Rāmānanda alone, was the early teacher of Śaṅkardew:

Kalāp Keśarī, nāme ek Ojā, āchanta sei grāmat:  
Āgat Śaṅkar, pāche Suryabar, bhailā tāna gṛhāgat. 132.

It is not known that any Kalāp Keśarī was any author at all. So two difficulties confront now; first, no work as *Rāmāyaṇ Candrikā* by any Assamese author is known save in this reference; and secondly, that Rām Saraswatī himself was too young when he first became a poet in the court of Nara Nārāyaṇ, and that he later became a court-poet even of Cilarai's grandson, Bali alias Dharma Nārāyaṇ's (1615-37) reign; it does not appear possible that his son could write his verses under the patronage of king Nara Nārāyaṇ unless we understand that "tāna prasāde" or 'by his grace' means that this second generation of Rām-Saraswatī enjoyed the fruits of the patronage, as Rām, Sarawatī explicitly wrote that the gifts made to him by king Nara Nārāyaṇ would serve to feed his successors for seven generations. So Kalāp Dvija may be a poet of this period.

RAM MISRA is another poet who seems shrouded in much anomaly. While in some manuscripts the battles of the first six days are detailed by Rām Saraswatī himself, those from the seventh to ninth day by Vidyā Pancānan, in some manuscripts of the *Bhīṣma Parva* it is found that the battles upto the ninth day have been narrated by Rām Miśra, and the fight of the tenth day has been described by Rām Saraswatī. It is so recorded in the work:

Nigadati Rām Miśra savāre āgat:  
Nawa dina yuddha ehi māne samāpat.  
Daśa dinā pad kaila Rām Saraswatī:  
Amāsar kṛta ehimāne samāpatī.

Another work, *Hitopadeśa*, a verse-rendering of Viṣṇu Sarma, contains the colophons of Rām Miśra with such autobiographical notes:

Garh grām nagarar, Rājar śvaśur bar,  
Neogar madhyam tanay:  
Mantri mājhe agragani pakṣīr garhura yeni  
Yār guṇ deśe deśe kay....  
Hena mantri gr̥he āsi, laiā pūrva puṇya rāśi  
Kaniṣṭha tanay bhailā jāt:  
Sangar kamāl prāi, yāta pare ān nāi  
Bhadrasen nāmat prakhyāt.  
Haripad kamalar, yār mukh-madhukar  
Madhupāne matta sarvadāi:  
Hit Upades śāstra, pārijāt tulya ito  
Bhramar paril ghrān pāi:  
Rāj-nīti kari rati Bhadrasen śuddha mati  
Ādeśila pad nivandhane.  
Doṣ guṇ parihari bolā save Hari Hari  
Alpamati Rām Miśre bhane.  
Parāsar gotre jāt, Rām Miśra nāme khyāt  
Micāi grame yāhār basati:  
Fukanar ājnā pāi Hit-upadeś cāi  
Biracilā pad yathā mati.

This means that Rām Miśra who belonged to the Parāsar Gotra and was a resident of Michāigāo, wrote this work under the patronage of one Bhadrasen Phukan, a daughter of which family was married by the Ahom king at Gadgāon. By this some critics mean to say that this is Suklenmung *alias* Gargayān Rajā (1539-52) who is referred to (D.C.A.M., p. 72) and others would say that this is Jayadhwaj Simpha (1648-63) who also had his capital at Gargāo who is referred to (A.B.S.B., p. 312).

PURUSOTTAM THAKUR, son of Rāmānanda and grandson of Śaṅkar-dew, is the author of Na-ghoṣā, a work written in imitation of the *Nām.-Ghoṣā*. There had been a temporary split between the followers of Puruṣottam in the Punjā Satra and those of Mādhawdew in the Bar-

petā Satra after the latter's demise. Being denied a copy of the *Nām-Ghoṣā* from the Barpetā Satra, Puruṣottam felt hurt and wrote one thousand couplets of the *Na-Ghoṣā* following the footsteps of Mādhawdew. Meanwhile Nārāyan Thākur, as asked by Gopāl Ātā of Bhavānīpur, came and the early friendship and cordial relation were restored, and Puruṣottam thinking that his work seemed, though not meant, a mark of dishonour to Mādhawdew, put his *Na-Ghoṣā* on fire. One aged disciple saw it and saved the work from fire, though partly damaged, as it is now found. He was a Sanskrit scholar of no mean repute and his *Na-Ghoṣā* contains Sanskrit verses in between his Assamese couplets. He also displays sufficient command over the poetic art.

Śaṅkar svarūpe Hari, nij amśe awatari

Bhakati pradīp lagāi thailā:

Mādhawa svarupe Hari, taite taila diā bāki

Ajñān āndhār dūra kailā. 144.

Śaṅkar nāti, nāmat khiāti, mor kichu guṇ nāi:

Bhritya vaṃśa buli, neribāha Hari, caranat diā thāi. 23.

'God in his own parts incarnated as Śaṅkar (dew) and lighted the lamp of devotion. Again as Mādhawa (dew) He has come to pour oil into the lamp and has thus removed the gloom of ignorance.' '(I happen to be) the grandson of Śaṅkardew and have a fame thereby. I have personally no merit. O God, expel me not, but find me room at Thy feet, considering that I belong to a family of Thy slaves.'

*Burhā Bhāṣya*, contains the colophons of one Puruṣottam and is thought to be the writing of Puruṣottam Thākur. Several *Bar Gīts* were also written by him.

*Guru-Guṇmālā* by Puruṣottam Thākur, son of Nārāyan Ātā, giving the biography of Śaṅkardew in a nutshell, in imitation of the *Kusum Mālā* metre and manner of *Kṛṣṇa Guṇmālā* by Śaṅkardew himself, and *Gītā Guṇmālā* by Paraśurām Dās, in the same *Kusum mālā* metre after Śaṅkardew, are noteworthy. One *Kewalā Ghoṣā* by Gopāl Ātā and Jadumanidew, also appears in print, in imitation of *Nām-Ghoṣā*, and *Na-Ghoṣā*:

Mādhawa Mādhawa prāṇ, Mādhawa Mādhawa ātmā,

Mādhawa Mādhawa Guru iṣṭa:

Mādhawa Mādhawa nām, sumaraṇe sumangal

Mādhawese dewa iṣṭa niṣṭa. 1.

Namoho Śaṅkardew, Mādhaw sāhite duiko,

Mor iṣṭa dewa dui jan:

Mādhawar siksā dhari, suddhabhāwe bhajō Hari,

Bandō hena bhaktar caraṇ. 2.

Mādhawdew died by the close of the sixteenth century under personal care of his sister's son, Rāmcaran, who does not seem to have been married till then. So he must have married and his son Daityārī



born to him about the first decade of the seventeenth century. So it may be surmised, DAITYĀRI THAKUR wrote his *Guru Caritra* on Śaṅkardew and Mādhawdew, and his nice dramatic work *Nṛsiṃha Yātrā* about the middle of the seventeenth century. This seems to be supported by the fact that Daityārī closes his *Guru Caritra* by saying that he wrote these biographies as he heard them from others, learnt a few things from his father too, and that he had no model before him. This could be so, probably because Rāmcaran married very late and Daityārī was too young when his father died and could not trace the manuscript of his father's work when he grew up in age. So the two works of the father and son, on the same subject, differ in some details.

RAMANANDA DVIJA is another biographer of Śaṅkardew. He or one of his name-sakes, wrote also *Gopāldew Carit*, dealing with the founder of the Kuruābāhi Satra. One manuscript, *Mahā-moh Kāvya*, describing the struggles of virtues and vices in the human heart in an allegorical way, is also attributed to one Rāmānanda Dviija (D.C.A.M., pp. 117-18). One *Mṛgāwatī Carit*, a fanciful love story taken from Sanskrit, showing the consequences of earthly love, contains such colophons:

“Biṣay biṣam biṣe haio birakati:  
Sādhu saṅge Hari pade kario bhakati.  
Ghor saṃsārar dukh erāibā tekhane:  
Kahe Dviija Rām Rām bolā sarvajane.”  
“Khaṇḍit biṣay tāt sukh nāhikay;  
Akhaṇḍa sukhak sādḥā bhaji Kṛpāmay.  
Kutcit biṣay āṛ chārio sakām;  
Kahe Dviija Rām dāki bolā Rām Rām.”

These are different works of different writers. For the colophons of Rāmānanda's life of Śaṅkardew (*Guru Caritra*) contain this name distinctly, as: “Kahe Rāmānande save bolā Hari Hari” (v. 88), while *Mahāmoh Kāvya* contains colophons as “Kahe Rām Dās”, etc., and those in *Mṛgāwatī* as “Kahe Dviija Rām”, etc., apparently telling different names.

*Santa-Ratna*, *Sādhu Śaṅgā Nirṇay*, and *Santasār* are the works which contain the colophons of Rāmānanda, besides *Gopāl Ātār Carit*. It is difficult to say that these belong to one and the same author. No reliable autobiographical notes in the work distinguish these writers either. One Rāmānanda, who founded the Cecā Satra in upper Assam, may easily be distinguished from Rāmānanda Dviija, or perhaps from Rāmānanda Das who compiled *Gopāl Ātār Carit*.

BHUSAN DVIJA, another biographer of Śaṅkardew, was styled as a court-poet of king Nara Nārāyaṇ evidently wrongly. He was a contemporary of Śaṅkardew's grandsons Puruṣottam and Caturbhuj, which



fact is amply supported by the following verses of his work (831-902). Again while one manuscript of *Ādi Parva* is Rām Saraswati's own work, another manuscript of *Ādi Parva* contains the colophons of as many as three writers, namely Aniruddha Das up to 385 verses, of Srinath Dvija upto 1044 verses, and of Dāmodar Vipra upto 1505 verses (D.C. A.M., pp. 98-99). Śrīnāth Dvija refers to the Koc king, Prāṇ Nārāyaṇ (1633-66), and evidently these are works of about the middle of the seventeenth century. Another manuscript of the *Śaila Parva* opens with:

Dharma Nārāyaṇ Raghudewar santān:  
Param sundar bir sarva rasa jñān.

and ends with the author's name:—

Manuṣya haibār jānā ehi māne kām:  
Dvija Dāmodare bhane bolā Rām Rām.

Another colophon gives his name as Vipra Dāmodar: "Vipra Dāmodar kahe nirantar". Apparently then Vipra or Dvija Dāmodar are one and the same person, but not Dāmodardew, the preacher. The poet acknowledges to have written his work under the patronage of king Makardhvaj who can perhaps be identified with king Mahendra Nārāyaṇ (1637-43) of the time of king Raghudew. Any way, it may roughly be assigned to the middle of the century. Aniruddha Das is Aniruddha Kāyastha, the great founder of the Māyāmarā community.

There is one interesting manuscript by three writers who appear to be domiciled Bengalees from their names, Gangādās Sen, Subudhi Rāi and Bhavāni Sen, on *Aśvamedh Parva* (D.C.A.M., pp. 99-100). Gangādās gives his father's name as Satibar, but the other two give no clue at all as to their parentage. Lakṣmināth Dvija, (grandson of Sarvānanda, a Sanskrit scholar of Helecha in Kāmrup, rewarded by king Rudra Siṃha for his scholarship, wrote his *Sānti Parva* about 1764, (D.C.A.M., pp. 112-13).

BHAVANANDA is the author of one kāvyā on *Harivaṃśa*, dealing with Śrī Kṛṣṇa's birth, which closes by saying:

Nānā kathā nānā dharma ehi sava aṃśa:  
Puṇyārthir puṇya howe śuni Harivaṃśa.  
Manohar ślok bhāṅgi raci pada bandhe:  
Śivānanda sute kahe dīn Bhavānande.

This informs that the author was the son of one Śivānanda. *Govind Carit* contains such colophons as:

Śuniko save nar, nām Bhavānanda mor  
Brāhman kulat utāpati:  
Bolo mai priya bāṇi, nindā nakaribā jāni  
Mai yen śiśu alpamati.

One colophon even refers to the Koc king Candra Nārāyaṇ (1643-60):

“Kato pīr bahi gai, Candra Nārān nṛpa hai.  
Paśilanta thānak samprati.”

This biography deals with the life of Govind Thākur of Lecākośi village in Kāmṛup who at the advice of Śaṅkardew was initiated by Mādhawdew, and also relates how Dāmodardew was initiated by Śaṅkardew:

Śaṅkarar pāse (teve) gaileka Brāhmaṇ...  
Mahā bibekit bipra nām Dāmodar...  
Malin basan ati sukomal kāyā:  
Dekhi tānka Sankarar janmileka dayā.  
Bhāgawat tattva dilā dharma pālibāk;  
Dilanta siksār mantra Dāmodardewak.

This book also tells us how Govind Thākur, after being initiated, threw away the idol of the goddess.

RAMCHANDRA BARPATRA is the author of *Hayagrīva Mādhawa*, in verse and written in imitation of the *Kīrtan-Ghoṣā* about 1681. It describes how sage Urba established the image of Hayagrīva Mādhawa, Viṣṇu, who killed the demon Haya, on the Maṇikut hill at Hājo in Kāmṛup. An autobiographical note:

Kenduguri nāme grām; Śasya matsye anupām.  
Bahe nadi abīśrām: Dīlih yāhār nām.  
Tār tīre kari ghar: āchilanta Pātrabar.  
Barpātra nām lailā: anek puruṣ gailā.  
Adhikarī pad pāi: gailā lok pravarttāi.  
Sehi vapse bhailā jāt: Rāmcandra nāme khyāt.  
Barpātra nām dhari: ācho rāj sewā kari.

It shows that the writer was a resident of the village Kenduguri, in the north-east of the Sibsāgar town where there is still a small river called Dīlih. This book was probably written about five years before his rendering of the *Yoginī Tantra* into Assamese verse, completed in the month of Aswin in 1608 Śaka, 1686, in the Ahom capital at Gargāo, as may be understood from the autobiographical note of this latter work:

Saumār pīthar Gargām nām yār:  
Sehi sthāne thāki mai rachilo payār.  
Nāmat Yoginī Tantra Mahesar bāni:  
Param sādare yāk śunilā Goṣāni.  
Āru ek kathā kaō śunio samprati:  
Yikalat pustak bhailā samāpati.  
Prapañca kariā ār racilō payār;  
Tithi mās bār abda karibō pracār,  
Nakṣatrādi yog fal sakalo barnibō:

Isavak diā pad racanā karibō.  
 Basugaṇ prathame miliā yeve āche:  
 Tār bām pāse mahā ākās prakāše.  
 Tār pāche ritucay yāi kāla krame:  
 Tāta anantare Candre cale śaśa same.  
 Uttar Fālguni kanyā same dibākar:  
 Tār lage hasta same āche śaśadhar.

This description proves both scholarship and mastery of the poetic art of the writer.

RAMNATH MAHANTA, with his predecessor Raghunāth, was descendant of Satānanda *alias* Bar Bhakat, and was an ancestor of Bargayā Gosāi of Tezpur. Rāmnāth's poetical work, *Sānta Mukṭāwali*, written sometime about 1708, describes how Śaṅkardew himself presented a copy of his rendering of the Bhāgawat Book Eleven to Bar Bhakat Satānanda and asked him to preach it:

Mahāyatne ślok bhāṅgi karicō padak:  
 Tomāk dilōho āji calio gṛhak.  
 Nām mātra japibāha hāte mālā dhari:  
 Lokako sikhāibā āk ati yatna kari.  
 Cāri tanayat tumi karāibāhā sewā:  
 Gopya kari Nām mantra cāriko kahibā.

Satānanda Bar Bhakat's four sons were Jaykṛṣṇa, Śrīkṛṣṇa, Trāhi Kṛṣṇa and Mahākṛṣṇa, the last of whom had a son named Rām Caran. This Rām Caran's grandson was Rāmnāth who founded the Barkalā Satra and composed this work about the first decade of the eighteenth century.

Another *Bhawānīpuriā Gopāldewar Caritra* with the colophon of one Pūrṇānanda, leaves the autobiographical colophon:

Bikāi Gomastā, nāme ekjan, śāstrat bar pārgat:  
 Kanauppurat. Gangār tīrat, āchilā save pūrvat.  
 Sapta dvāradvaj paṇḍit jania, Paraśurāme ānilā:  
 kato din māne, tathāte thākiā Porādi grāme bancilā.  
 Brishhalikucit Nar Nārāyaṇ, yeve āni pātilanta:  
 Tāhān vamsat, Bhakatiā nāme, Mahājan ek bhailanta:  
 Dewram Candra, tāhāna tanay, lokar hit cintilā:  
 Kāljar thāne, Gopālar mukhe, śuddha upadeś lailā.  
 Tathā hante āni. Thāura moharat, gaiā Satra pātilanta:  
 Tāhāna tanay, Kirttāniā nām, bhailā mahā guṇawanta.  
 Sarva guṇānvit, param paṇḍit, tāna putra tini jan:  
 Tāsambār madhye janam labhilō, Pūrṇānanda dīn jan.

So Pūrṇānanda was the son of Kirttāniā of Thāuramohar Satra and grandson of Dewrām Candra who was a disciple of Gopāl Atā. *Santa Sār* is another work in verse perhaps by the same author, the name

Purnānanda always appearing in the colophons. These are all second class works.

Three poetical works, by Brahmacāri Bālakānanda, are *Arjun-Gīta*, *Gupta Sār* and *Vaiṣṇavi Gītā*. There are echoes or repetitions of other writings and some colophons in *Gupta Sār* even bear the name of Śaṅkardew. One small book *Śivar Jhunā* has Śaṅkardew's name in colophon, which is apparently forged. *Uṣā Haraṇ*, a book of songs like those of Durgābar and Nārāyaṇ, contains the name of the latter. Another Nārāyaṇ's name appear in a poetical work *Sampradā Caritra* which must be a very late work, as seen from its composition, and some head-teacher of Nāzirā Budbari Satra is credited with its authorship. *Uṣā Haraṇ* contains the manner of Nārāyaṇ, and the names of Uṣā and Aniruddha are correlated as incorporated in the *Padma Purāṇ*. Antiquity and merit of all these works cannot be admitted. One *Śiśupāl Vadh* Kāvya contains the colophon:

Param bāndhaw Hari, jānio niścay kari  
Param suhrd tāna nām:  
Bole Śiṣṭa Bhattachārya, erā save ān kārya,  
Nirantare bolā Rām Rām.

Very little is known about this poet Śiṣṭa Bhattacharya; but his homely descriptions prove him to be a very popular poet of comparatively later times. Kṛṣṇa describes the hypocritic behaviour of his maternal uncle:

Mok basibāk lāgi āsan bicāri cāi  
Yogya pātra nāpāle bicāri:  
Khurā bhagā pirā khani, opare dhāki di kāni  
Momāye āgat dile pāri. . .

Kṛṣṇa reproaches Śiśupāl in a language which seems too colloquial:

Bhobolā chāgali, siṃhak siāre, āponāk bar māni:  
Bhatuā kukure, kāmor māray, grhastha cor nājāni:  
Narak dekhile śrgāl palāi, lukāi ban samāi:  
Gadhūli puāhe, ātās pāray, mot kari bar nāi.  
Hāti curi kari, yāi āge āge, bengenā corak dhare:  
Nākti kātīle, lāj nalāgai, nakhti kātīle mare.

Another interesting work, *Siāl Gosāi* or Fox-god contains the colophon:

Sūrya vipra kule janma mai adhamar:  
Darangar madhye grām Chaparāt ghar.  
Nāme Kavirāj kavi suchanda sadāi:  
Cāul māgi furō ehi kavītā barṇāi.

So this Kavirāj Daibajna who was a resident of Chapara village in Darrang, was a minstrel who lived on his profession of singing. The theme of his song is that there was a Brahman named Dharmadew Bhūyā, whose two wives Kundatarā and Candatarā quarrelled, resulting in the throwing away of the new-born baby of Candatarā in the

absence of her husband, by some trick. The baby was however reared by a vixen and brought up as an issue of her own. When Dharmadew Bhūyā returned, he enquired of it and rescued his son. The poet had due mastery over his art as can be felt from such couplets:

Ek dinā prabhātat, Sūrya mahā udayat,  
 Āsi bāj bhaileka garttar:  
 Lagat śrgāl chāwā, ati ānandit huyā  
 Save rang karay bistār.

It was held to be written sometime about 1616, but from the language and style, its date must not be earlier than the eighteenth century.

*Narottam Thakur* is the author a poetical work *Bhakti Premāwali* written in imitation of the *Kīrttan-Ghoṣā*, and *Nām-Ghoṣā*, which are echoed here and there:

‘Jaya jaya Kṛṣṇa ishta jagatar guru:  
 Kāranaro kāran Pūrṇa Brahma kalpataru.’  
 ‘Kaliuge nām, Treta yuge yajna, Dvāparat pūjā dān.’

Two other names as *Narottam Vipra* or *Dviija*, and *Narottom Das* also appear in the verse renderings of *Brahma Baibartta Purān*, and it is not certain whether they are one and the same *Narottam*, as it was a Vaiṣṇavite humility for the true devotees of this faith to style themselves as ‘dās’ or slaves at the feet of God and of his other true devotees. Some would identify *Narottam Das* with a Naga disciple of Śaṅkardew. Some *Haridās Vipra* rendered the *Asvamedh Parva*; and *Balorām*, *Nandīswar* and *Khageswar Dviijas* rendered the *Brahma Baibartta Purān* into Assamese. *Balorām* gives his genealogy in his work and says that he was the son of *Nityānanda* and grandson of *Madhumiśra* and so forth.

*NARAYAN DAS*’s *Arjun Sambād* describes the dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna on the *Varṇāśrama Dharma*, as may be understood from such colophons:

Śunā sabhāsad, Gītā Bhāgawat, Kṛṣṇa Arjunat kailā.  
 Gurur ājnāt, Nārāyan Dāse, pada bandhe nibandhilā.

*Visnuram Dviija*’s work, *Dātā Karṇa* contains such colophons:

Dviija Viṣṇurāme kahe Viṣṇur ādeśe:  
 Karṇe kṛpa kaila prabhu Brāhmaṇar beśe.

Besides one *Lakṣmī Caritra* with *Rām Saraswatī*’s name in the colophon, another is found with *Jagannāth Dviija*’s name. *Bhavadew Vipra* wrote one *Nagākṣa Yuddha Kāvya* describing the fight of *Hanumān* with *Nagākṣa*. *Rudrarām*’s poetical work *Nītiratna* presents a discourse on morality as is supposed to be delivered by the *navaratna*

of the court of Vikramāditya. A rendering of the *Lankā Kāṇḍa* is found with colophons:

Janame janame hauka Rāmat bhakati:  
Adbhut Ācārya Kavi Madhur Bhāratī.

Nothing definite is known about this poet Adbhut Ācārya nor is it known whether the words "Madhur Bhāratī" are used as his title.

One anonymous work *Svapnādhyāya* begins and closes with:

"Pratham prahare svapna yijane dekhay:  
Batsarek māne tār falak pāway.  
Dvitiya prahare svapna dekhe yito jan:  
Tār fal pāy jānā chay mās māt."  
"Svapanaṭ rudhir bahe yāhār śarīre:  
Nuhibā rudhire snān kare yito nare.  
Vyādhi guci kalyāṇak pāwe..."

Nothing can be guessed about this writer. Another anonymous work *Syamanta Haran Nāt*, not the one by Daityāri, is also found in manuscript.

Nilakantha's *Dāmodar Carit* had been the subject of a bad controversy, as the printed work does not fully answer to the description of the manuscript (D.C.A.M. No. 36) and the editor admits in his long preface (p. 45), that he had not seen the original work, but had edited the work from a copy made of late. Besides, many things were said in the preface not warranted by facts and detached from contexts. Ramakanta Dviya's *Banamali Carit* had the same fate.

Like Rāmraī's life of Dāmodardew, Ambarīs Dviya wrote the life of Keśawdew, the Adhikār of the Āuniāti Satra, during the reign of king Jayadhvaj Siṃha (1654-1663). This work like its companions probably belonged to the first part of the eighteenth century or the close of the seventeenth century, as also Vidyānanda Ojha's *Thākur Caritra* (biographical accounts of Puruṣottam and Caturbhuj). Vidyācandra rendered *Hari Vamśa* into Assamese verse in the reign of Rājeswar Siṃha (1751-69), giving an account of Kṛṣṇa and his doings.

KAVIRAJ CAKRAVARTI was the court-poet of two successive Ahom kings Rudra Siṃha (1695-1714) and Śiva Siṃha (1714-44), and wrote his work *Saṅkhaṭur Badh* in verse under orders of the latter and his queen Fuleswari *alias* Bar Rājā (who died in 1717) as the following colophon shows:

Saumār Pīthar Śiva siṃha adhipati:  
Hari-Har caranat sadā yār matī.  
Tāhān āchil jāyā Fuleswarī nām:  
Patnigaṇ madhye śreṣṭha guṇe anupām.  
Hena nṛpa mahiṣiro ājnā śire dhari:

Kavirāj Cakravartī mati anusari.  
 Param sundar Brahma Vaivartta Purāṇ:  
 Vyāsdewe bāndhi āchā nānā upākhyān.  
 Vaiṣṇavar madhye sār Śaṅkhacūr nām.  
 Dānawar adhipati guṇe anupām.

So this work must have been written by the middle of the first decade of the eighteenth century.

Kavirāj is also credited with the rendering of Jayadeva's *Gīta Govindam* into Assamese verse under orders of King Śiva Siṃha and his queen Fuleswarī or Bar Rajā; but the colophons to this work contain the title Dvijabar:

Bhane Dvijabare, śunā save nare, chārā bhāṣ-bhuṣ kām:  
 Palāuk pātak, labhibā sukhak, dāki bolā Rām Rām.  
 Bhane Kavi Dvijabare erā ān kām:  
 Samasta samāje dāki bolā Rām Rām.

The manuscript (No. 46, D.C.A.M., pp. 54-56) abounds with profuse illustrations in every page. Kavirāj also rendered the *Brahma Vaivartta Purāṇ Kṛṣṇa Janma Khaṇḍa* into Assamese verse, this time under orders of king Śiva Siṃha and his royal consort Pramatheswarī. This is clear from the following autobiographical note:

Indrar varṣat Rudra Siṃha narapati:  
 Saumār deśar pati bhailā mahāmati.  
 Tāhān pratham putra Śiva Siṃha Rāi:  
 Dewatā Viprat bhaktimanta suddha kái.  
 Nāmat Pramatheswarī suddha sūkṣma jāyā:  
 Indrar ramanī yen Ādityar chāyā.  
 Hena Śiva Siṃha Rājā Pramath Īswarī:  
 Manuṣya lokat yen Śiva Maheswarī.  
 Tāhān ādeś mālā śirogat kari:  
 Kavirāj Cakravartī mati anusari.  
 Purāṇar śreṣṭha Brahma Vaivartta Purāṇ:  
 Kṛṣṇa Janma Khaṇḍa tāte param pradhān.  
 Tathāpito pada bandhe deś bhāṣā dhari:  
 Mati anusāre biracilō yatna kari.

This work, being written after Fuleśwarī's death in 1717, may be assigned to 1718 approximately.

Of two manuscripts named *Gītar Bakalā* and *Gītar Puthi* (Nos. 47 & 48, D.C.A.M., pp. 56-57); the first contains several religious songs by unknown writers, and the latter contains songs of various poets including Kavirāj Cakravartī and kings Rudra Siṃha and Śiva Siṃha.

MISCELLANEOUS WRITERS: One poetical work of this period contains the following autobiographical note in the colophon:

Saumār pīthar sama nāhi (sthān) ān:  
 Satate thākanta yat Bhavāni Īṣān.

Sehi pīth madhye āche purī nānā khān:  
 Keho nohe Rangpur nagarī samān.  
 Tāte Śiva Siṃha bhaila duti surapati.  
 Sehise nagar jānā duti Amrāwati:  
 Pramatheswarīse bhailā tāna pateśwari:  
 Rūpe-guṇe kato yār nāhi saribari.  
 Tāsambar sange thāki mai bidyāhin:  
 Rājā dujanār hit banchi prati din.  
 Ananta Ācārya bhane eri āna bāpī:  
 Nirantare bolā nare Śaṅkar Bhavānī.

This shows that Ananta Ācārya was another poet who wrote his works under the patronage of king Śiva Siṃha and his consort Pramatheswarī, whence the work may roughly be dated 1718. His descriptions of Saumār Pith and Rāngpūr (Sibsagar) are excellent.

DHARMA SAMBAD, a poetical work of this period, contains the autobiographical note:

Aśwamedh Parva Bhāratar madhye sār:  
 Śloka artha cāi pad nivandhilō tār.  
 Śiva Siṃha dharma-rājā guṇe Nārāyaṇ:  
 Karanta bhakati sadā Kṛṣṇar caraṇ.  
 Tāhān ādeś pāi Dvija Śubhanāthe:  
 Racilā payār Hari pad dhari mātne.

This implies that poet Śubhanāth wrote this work, under the patronage of king Śiva Siṃha, from Aswamedh Parva, by consulting commentaries. The work may be dated c. 1720.

Some rendering of the *Bhāgawat*, Books Seven and Nine, contains such colophons:

“Śrīmantha Śaṅkar yito, Kāyastha kulat tehō  
 Param paṇḍit guṇaśil....  
 Tāhān bhrātr nāti yadibā āmāk bole  
 Tathāpito tāhān kinkar.”  
 “Gurusikṣā anusari, tikā bhāṣya mat dhari  
 Pad karilō Navam Skandhar....  
 Kṛṣṇar kinkar dīn kahay Keśawa Dās  
 Erā lok biṣayar kām.”

So this poet Keśaw was a grandson of Rāmraī, the famous cousin of Śaṅkardew. It is considered that he rendered these works into Assamese verse in the first half of the eighteenth century. His scholarship and mastery of poetic art are remarkable.

Two other works *Kalkī Purāṇ* and *Mārkaṇḍeya Caṇḍī* contain such colophons:

“Bāsava vaṃśat jāt, Rudra Siṃha nāme khyāt,  
 Saumār Pithar adhipati:  
 Kāmṛūp adhikarī durjanar dandakārī.



Gadādhara Sīṃha santati: ....  
 Kāmṛūp adhikārī tehē pur karilek  
 Thāpilek taita Vipragan:  
 Nānā sthān hante niā, br̥tti bidhānak diā  
 Ānilek anek Brāhman.  
 Yi sthānat Viprabar, nānā guṇe guṇākar,  
 Bhaila Kṛṣṇācārya suddhamati:  
 Tāna putra Rucināthe, Durgāk seviā mātthe,  
 Candīpad racila Samprati."

Lohitar uttar kulat anupām:  
 Ek deś āche Nārāyaṇpur nām.  
 Tathāte āchil Ratna Kandali Dharmādi:  
 Kāśyap gotrat jāt Vipra satyabādī.  
 Tāna vaṃṣe jāt bhailā Vipra Rāmpati:  
 Tāmolbārīt tān bhaileka basati.  
 Pāche tān putra Raghupati bhailā jāt:  
 Tān putra Balorām guṇe atirek.  
 Balor tanay Rām sewak bhailanta:  
 Bhaila tān putra Kṛṣṇa Ācārya prakhyāt:  
 Tāna hante Rukmiṇī garbhe mai jāt:  
 Sei mai Vipra alpamati Rucināth....  
 Kalkī Purāṇar pad karilōho āge:  
 Racilō Candīr pad eve anurāge.

This clearly shows that Rucinath was born to Kṛṣṇ Ācārya and Rukmiṇī, a grandson of Baloram and great grandson of Raghupati, who trace their origin to Ratna Kandali who originally resided at Nārāyaṇpur on the northern bank. It also records that Rucināth's earlier work was *Kalki Purāṇ* and his *Mārkaṇḍeya Caṇḍī* was a later work, and the dates 1755 and 1759 are assigned to these works. Madhusūdan Mīśra also made another rendering of *Mārkaṇḍeya Caṇḍī*. One rendering of *Harvaṃśa* contains the colophon:

Sarvadeśe rājā bhailā sehi din dhari:  
 Indrar prabhābe pāilā deś deśāntari.  
 Sehi vaṃṣe Rājeswar Sīṃha narapati:  
 Santa danta śiṣṭa miṣṭa ati śuddha mati.  
 Tāhān tanay Cāru Sīṃha mahāmāti:  
 Guṇigaṇ madhye śreṣṭha bipul śakati...  
 Tāna patnī Premadā nāmat manonitā:  
 Sarva guṇawatī yen Drupad duhitā...  
 Tāsambār ājnā muktāmālā śire dhari:  
 Śrī Kaviśekhara Bhattācārya Dvija Hari.  
 Bhāṣā vandhe nivandhilō Harivaṃśa pad,  
 Śuna nīśabde śuddha buddha sabhasad:

This shows that Dvijahari Bhattācārya Kaviśekhara wrote this work under orders of king Rājeswar Sīṃha (1751-60) and so it may roughly be dated 1755. One *Santa Carit* with the colophon of Kavi Kṛṣṇācārya

appears in a small work appended to Nilakaṇṭha's Dāmodar Carit, which apparently is a work belonging to this period.

**RELIGIOUS SONGS:** Sonārm Cāudhāri, a learned research scholar, wrote a series of articles in the *Bāhī*, (Vol. XVIII, 8, ff) quoting songs by Premabhuṣaṇ and Kaivalyānandan, evidently the two successive Adhikārs or masters of the Dihing Satra, the latter being a disciple of the former and the former in turn being perhaps the fourth disciple of Jadumanidew by turns, Jadumanidew himself a disciple of Gopāldew of Bhavānīpur, who again was a disciple of the great Mādhawdew. Hence they probably belong to the latter part of the seventeenth or early part of the eighteenth century. Caudhāri quoted the songs from an old manuscript partly damaged. Out of the 86 songs that he could restore, only one belonged to Premabhuṣaṇ and all the rest were composed in imitation of Bar Gīts by Śaṅkardew and Mādhawdew and were bound in such 'rāgs' or tunes as Kau, Rāmgiri, Gaurī, Basanta, Asoāri, Ohir, etc., etc. and on such phases as we find in the songs of Mādhawdew in particular.

There is another type of religious oral poetry which may be given a generic name *Dihā Nām*, religious songs usually sung as chorus with verses of the *Kīrttan Ghoṣā* mainly. The special charm about them is that they show a saturation of love, the like of which is seen only in the Tamil songs of the Āḷwars and with them they mostly agree. Neog's collection, *Bhogjāra*, contains nearly a hundred of such selected songs:

Āmāre Kṛṣṇak kate dekhilā? Cāre Bṛndābane dhenu.  
Dhenu cāribalai gal! Tāte gadhūli hal.  
Śyām Kānu cāre Bṛndābane dhenu: hātate mohona benu.

These ideas are so alike with such Tamil songs of Āḷwar Śrī Āṇḍāl, the Daughter of Devotion and early Mīrā Bāi of the South:

"The dark Bull that grazed the herd, the young Calf next to Baladeva. Did you see him wending his way full of play?" 'Yes! Giving water to his herd of cows, we saw him at Bṛndāban full of play.' Again, the Assamese *Dihā Nāms* in the above collection,

Runuk-junuk kari nūpur bajāi: Rādhār padhūliye kon kon yāi.  
Dhar dhar Kaliā kalai palāy: Nadharibi nadharibi Rādhā joāi.

This has a striking resemblance with a devotional Tamil song by Periya Āḷwar:

"With anklets jingling at His feet,  
With armlets (sounding) round His wrists:  
With gold necklace (flowing) from His neck,  
My Kānnan walks behind me stealthily:

And embraces me from my back.  
My lord embraces me from my back."

In still other Assamese *Dihā Nāms* one finds more parallels of Tamil songs of early Āḷwar poets:

"Rādhikā Sundarī duyo janā: Kadamar talalai māti ānā.  
Kelei mātiche tāko jāno: Kadamar talalai yāba noārō.  
Daivakī-nandan: pindhi āche candan:  
Kadamar talate rai: Rādhālai bātari kai."

"My little Dwarf, my Ambrosia, my Lord  
Calls you, with His little hands beckoning you:  
If you make up your mind to play with the Dark-hued.  
Come well pleased. Oh big Moon, hide not behind the clouds."

("Śrī Kṛṣṇa's Love in Tamil Literature": *The Kalyāṇa Kalpataru*, Vol. IV, No. 1).

But this is accidental and by the way. The cult of Devotion had its fermentation in the hearts of men in Southern as well as in Northern India, some centuries before the Christian era as many centuries after.

RAGHUNATH MAHANTA is another important author of this period whose contribution to Assamese prose is remarkable. He was the son of Kṛṣṇanāth and grandson of Hari Kṛṣṇa who is said to be founder of the Dayāṅg Elengi Satra and who was a renowned Sanskrit scholar of the time. Raghunāth is of the sixth generation from Satānanda alias Bar Bhakat who was initiated by Śaṅkardew on the former's way to pilgrimage. Like Vaikuṇṭhanāth's *Kathā Bhāgavat* and *Kathā Gītā*, Raghunāth's *Kathā Rāmāyaṇ* is an invaluable work, the first four kāndas of which have been preserved. Raghunāth was also a poet of no mean order. *Satrunjay*, written in 1658, describes the adventures of Bali, and *Adbhut Rāmāyaṇ*, giving a gist of the Rāmāyaṇa stories, contains the following colophon with autobiographical hints:

Kṛṣṇar kiṅkar Bar Bhakta vamaśe jāt:  
Alpamati Raghunāth nāmat bikhyāt.

His prose Rāmāyaṇa also begins as: "Āmār ito anucit karma jāni nindā nūbuli kṛpā ras ucita hay. Puṇu Śrīrām caraṇat mor koti prapāṁ. He prabhu Rām, tumi pūrṇa kām, koti Brahmāṇḍar kāraṇ, niraṇjan nirā-kār, yāk Vedānteo pratyakṣa kaite napārīlā kintu anway byatirekere nānā upamāre nirdeś karihe tomāk kahiche." "This work of mine is a case for mercy rather than of condemnation as coming from an undeserving author. Again, crores of salutation from me at the feet of Śrī Rām. O Lord Rām, Thou art Perfection, the source of crores of universes. Thou art beyond attributes, devoid of form. Even the Vedānta failed to describe Thee, but has ascertained Thee only by the help of similes and

other means.' It concludes with the following: "Tumio dinabandhu Kṛpāsindhu patit pāvan sarvajna, ihāk jāni katar karichō; mor manda budhi dūr kari nij dās kari laio. Eteke kārītārtha haō. He sabhāsada: Ohi Śrī Rāmar kathā samaste dharmate gariṣṭha. Āka eka citte yijane man kare, saṃsār taribe i ki bicitra. Vaṃśako uddhār kari parampad pāy. Eteke ihāk sadā sraṇṇ kirttan kari ucca kari Hari bolā Hari." 'Thou too art friend of the poor, a sea of mercy, a saviour of the sinner, and Omniscient. Knowing this I submit myself to Thee, do receive me as Thy own slave removing my dull wit. Then alone I can feel glorified. O learned members, these details of Śrī Rām are the most supreme things of all religions. He who minds them with all attention, will be delivered of this world; it is no wonder. He will deliver also his family and attain perfection. So do always hear them, speak of them, and shout 'Hari', 'Hari'.' Unlike Mādhaw Kandali, Raghunāth's conception of Rām is not an ideal of man, but is of Ego. This proves that the style of Raghunāth is far simpler than that of Vaikuṇṭhanāth, though separated by a gap of fifty or sixty years only.

Besides Raghunāth's *Kathā Rāmāyaṇ* of 1658, this period witnessed many other Vaiṣṇavite prose works. The manuscript of the prose work on Mādhawdew's *Nām Ghoṣā*, styled *Kāthā Ghoṣā*, contains (No. 74, D.C.A.M., pp. 88-89), neither the name of the author nor the date of its composition. But the date of the last copy is given as 1637 Saka, 1715. So the original work may perhaps safely be assigned to the latter half to the seventeenth century. This learned prose work opens with the lines:

"Śrī Kṛṣṇa āpunār nij mūrṭti Maheśak bandilā. Keneno āpani nije Brahma huyā mūrṭtik namile ei kathā Hari-Har Sambādat āche. tār pad āni pratham Kandhat kaiche. Tāk āni Śrī Mādhawdewe Ghoṣā karilanta."

'Śrī Kṛṣṇa has worshipped his own image Maheś. Why has he done so being Ego itself, is related in the *Hari-Har Sambād*. It has been described in Skandha One by getting its verses. Mādhawdew has used it in the (*Nām*) *Ghoṣā*.'

**VARIOUS PROSE WORKS:** Another important prose work of this period is *Hara-Gaurī Sambād* (discourse between Śiva and Parvatī) on religious and sacred places (No. 45, D.C.A.M., pp. 64-65). As in the *Kathā Ghoṣā*, both the name of author and the date of composition are unknown. Besides giving an account of the geographical divisions and of sacred places of India, the writer describes how this country was cursed by the sage Vasiṣṭha and when it will be free from this curse. This work also appears to belong to the latter half of the seventeenth or the first half of the eighteenth century.

*Padma Purāṇ* is also a prose-work by an anonymous writer. The date of composition of the work is not recorded, but the copy was probably prepared in the last decade of the eighteenth century. It describes the religious rites and duties that a pious Hindu should observe in different days and months of the year. It opens and closes with such lines as :

“Mahādewat Pārvatiye sodhanta, he Mahāprabhu Sadāsiwa, mai yadi tomār nij dāsi haō, mok prati prasanna haiā rudrākṣare Kuś mūlare ki mahimā mai śunibāk icchā karō.” ‘Pārvati enquired of Mahādew, ‘O Lord, Sadāsiwa, if I be your own slave, you may be pleased to fulfil my desire of hearing the glories of *rudrākṣa* (rosary) and of the root of the *Kuśa* (grass).’ “Kārtik māsat yi Parameswarak tulasi dān kare, ayut go-dānar fal pāy. Āru Māgh māsat yijane prātasnān kari brahmacarya dhari Īśwarak cinti thāke tār mahāpātak naṣṭa hay. Iti Śrī Padma Purānānar samāpti adhyāya samāptaḥ. Āke jāni nirantare Hari bolā.” “He, who makes gift of the *tulasi* (plant) in the month of Kārtik, he who takes bath very early morning in the month of Māgh, meditates God by observing *brahmacarya*, gets his bad sins wasted. So the concluding chapter of *Padma Purāṇ* is finished. Knowing this do incessantly say Hari, say Hari.”

*Kāmaratna Tantra* is the Assamese prose-rendering of original Sanskrit work of Gorakṣanāth, by some anonymous writer, beginning and closing with such lines as: “Śrī Kṛṣṇāya namaḥ. Atha Śiva Pārvati Sambād. Eka dinā Pārvatiye Śaṅkarat sodhanta, Prabhu, Kāmaratna Tantra mot kahā. Śaṅkare kahanta, jānā Pārvati, baś ākarṣaṇ bidveṣaṇ stambhaṇ mārān śāntipuṣṭi ādi kari ei karma sakal ye kālat ye niyame kariba tāka kahō.” ‘Salutation to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Then the discourse between Siva and Parvati. One day Parvati enquired of Śaṅkara (Siva), ‘Lord, relate to me the *Kāmaratna Tantra*.’ Śaṅkara said, ‘Now, Pārvati, subjugation, attraction, repulsion, precipitation, invasion, pacification, nutrition and such actions are to be performed according to the time and manner as I am going to say.’ “Atha sarva jantu biṣ nibāraṇ. Siddha biracitaṁ Kāma Ratna Tantra trayodaś upadeś samāpta.” “Then how to stop poison in animals....Thus the Thirteenth Advice of *Kāmaratna Tantra* composed by Śrī Gorakṣanāth Siddha is finished.’ Apparently this is a work on charms, incarnations and medicines.

*Sāttvata Tantra*, again by some anonymous writer, is an Assamese prose-rendering of the Sanskrit work on *Nārada Panca Rātrā*.

It begins as: “Rūp sparśa sabda ei tini tejar buhibā. Rūp ras sparśa sabda cārio jalar buhibā. Pṛthivī sakal gun buhibā. Caubīs tattva purus racichā nimitta huyā āpunār amṣe caturdaś bhuvanātmak Birāt janmāilā.” Form, fluid, touch, sound, know these four as belonging to ‘teja’ (energy). Form, touch, sound, know these three as belonging

to water. Know everything on earth to be guṇ (matter). Fourteen universes each was brought into existence out of Ego's own parts, Puruṣa having acted like a cause.'

The work is complete in nine chapters, but is found damaged in parts. It dwells on *bhakti* and other allied subjects. A poetical version of *Sātvata Tantra* is since published.

ŚRĪ HASTA MUKTAWALI in Assamese prose has of late been discovered. It is presented as a discourse between Siva and Parvati on different forms of Dance.

"Maheśe bolanta, 'He Gaurī, tumi kibā hastar rasak jānā.' Gaurī bolanta, 'Āmi yadi nājāno ān konbā striye jāne.' Maheśe bolanta, 'yadi jānā teve kahā': hṛdayat dui ṣṭhala padma hasta haile kihak kahe." Gaurī bolanta, 'Dui stanak kahe.' Gaurī bolanta, 'punarbār ān sodhā.' Maheśe bolanta, 'Karttari mukh nāme hasta duik eke lage karile kihak kahe: ihāko kahā.' Ehi śuni ratisūcak hasta jāniā Gaurī alpa hāsyā kariā adhomukha haila: eman Gaurīk hāsyā kari cumban karichā ye Maheśe sehi Sadāsīvae torā sakalak rakṣā karantok." 'Mahes says, 'O Gauri, do you know anything about gestures of hands?' Gauri says, 'what woman else can know if not I?' Mahes says: 'Tell me then if you know. If the two hands are placed on the chest to represent two land-lotuses, what will it signify?' Gauri says, 'It means the two breasts.' Gauri says, 'Now put another question to me.' Mahes says, 'Tell me what it may signify when two palms are joined together....' 'On hearing this and knowing this to be a sexual gesture, Gaurī smiled gently, her head downcast. Let Siva, who then smiled and kissed Gauri, and who does welfare of all, protect you.'

This was rendered from the Sanskrit poetical work of Śubhankar the renowned poet who has been described next: "Emat prakāre Śubhankar Kavi āśīrbād bidhān kari grantha nivandhanak prati pratijan bōle. Śubhankar kavi rasik sakalar santosar nimittee Śrī Hasta Mukṭāwali nāma granthak nirūpan kare. Kīmat Śubhankar Kavi: āka kahi: ye buddhik sahāi kariā guṇa samudrat ati duskar dṛrha majjan kariche: narttak narttakīr dvārāye ati prakāśmān nātak śāstrat utsuk haiche: ār pandit samudrat candra sadṛś haiā gīta muktā-panktik nirmal kariche." "Thus poet Śubhankar showering benedictions took the vow of compiling the work. Poet Śubhankar composed this work named Śrī Hasta Mukṭāwali for the satisfaction of its admirers. Who was this poet Śubhankar? Here is the answer: it is he who has dived deep in the sea of virtues with the help of intelligence: he who has been earnest in the dramatic works so illumined by the dancing men and women; and he who like the moon in the sea of a vast number of scholars has brightened the rows of pearls in the shape of songs.'

The work thus concludes: "Ekhan Śubhankar Kavi granthar samāptiḥ nṛpādīr āśīrbād bidhān kare: samaste jay-yukta rājāsakalar paraspāre maitrī bārhok, kīrtti bārhok, santa sakalaro āpad naṣṭa hauk, puṇyāwanta sakalaro kīrtti brddhi hok: nīti beśyā strīr sadṛś ānanda

pūrṇa badan haiā sarvādire hṛdayat āśis kariā prati dibase mantrī-sakalar badanak cumban karok." 'Now poet Śubhankar showers blessings on kings and others for the completion of his work; may friendship thrive among victorious kings. May their glories thrive! May all miseries of the saints be destroyed! May the fame of the virtuous increase! May morality kiss the faces of the ministers by embracing them in their hearts with a face all shining with joy, like a courtesan.'

One Sanskrit manuscript of Sri Hasta Mukṭāwali by poet Subhankar was found in the Nepal Durbar Library at Khatmandu and another copy of it is said to have been found in Darbhanga in old Mithila. The third manuscript with an Assamese prose rendering was found in the possession of one Suchāndrāi Ojā of Kamrup whose ancestors were by hereditary directors of orchestra that accompanied dancing, in ancient Kāmarūpa. Thirty-nine different dances have been described in the book and they have been divided into three classes as those by one hand, those by both hands and those by two hands and the whole body. It has not been fully established to what part of the country Śubhankar belonged, but it is not impossible that he might flourish in the mediaeval Kāmarūpa which was pre-eminently a land of Śaivism abounding with Siva temples, amply provided with Devadāsīs, girls dancing before god Siva in accompaniment of music at the time of evening worship, and its kings supplying also elephants, men, etc. for service, and land grants for the maintenance of the priests. Even inscriptions like the one of king Vanamāl Varman of the ninth century bear evidence to such facts. A Kāyastha family of Kāmṛup claims its descent from Śubhankar Kavi, and the present discovery of the work with its rendering in Assamese prose appears to support this view. The name of the translator of the work is not given.

*Bhāsvati* is the Assamese prose rendering of a Sanskrit work of that name which opens with the Sanskrit verse giving the translator's acquaintance:

Rabipada kamalam praṇamya mūrddha sumati-  
karam kaṇḍe Bhāsvati pravandhe.  
Racayati Kavirāja Cakravartī nija suta  
mahabhīde kathām Dvijagre.

It says that this work was rendered into prose by Kavirāj Cakravartī for the enlightenment of his son. The closing sentences of the work say: "Śrīmanṭa Dāk Sarasvatī ātmaja Śrī Kavirāj Cakravartī viracita Bhāsvati sastrar kathā samāpti haila." So the writer was the son of one Dāk Sarasvatī which title shows that the father was also a renowned scholar. It is no literal translation of the original work and the translator differs in certain points for which he quotes his authority in *Surya Siddhānta* and *Mahā Jyotiṣ*.



### III. DEVELOPMENT OF DIVERSE SECULAR PROSE

**HISTORICAL PROSE:** Side by side with religion, people in this period, as in its predecessors, paid due attention to secular subjects, and surely the most important and interesting of these secular subjects is history. Another secular subject allied to it may be mentioned the genealogical literature, *Vanśāwalīs*, where the historical literature of this period on one hand, and biographical literature or the *Caritāwalīs* of the previous period on the other, meet. The third and the last, but by no means the least, secular topic, is the scientific literature.

Sir George Abraham Grierson in his monumental *Linguistic Survey of India* writes:—"Assamese is essentially a national product. It always has been national and it is still. The genius of the people has led it along lines of its own and its chief glory, history, lists a branch of study almost unknown to the indigenous literature of Bengal. Whether the nation has made the literature or the literature the nation, I know not; but as a matter of fact, both have been for centuries and are still in vigorous existence." (Vol. V, No. 1, p. 394).

Undoubtedly the practice of writing history was a gift, and the most precious gift, which the people of the old country of Kāmarūpa received from the Ahoms of the Shan tribe who entered this old country by its eastern gate about 1228. The Assamese word Buranji (the storehouse of knowledge) itself is borrowed and it is only a few of such words, from the stock of the tongue of this Tai race. To quote Sir Grierson once more—"The Assamese are justly proud of their national literature. In no department have they been more successful than in a branch of study in which India, as a rule, is curiously deficient. The historical works or Buranjis, as they are styled by the Assamese, are numerous and voluminous. According to the custom of the country, a knowledge of the Buranjis was an indispensable qualification to an Assamese gentleman." (*Ibid*).

The exact time whence the Ahoms wrote their chronicles in Assamese is not known. They had their own speech and in it they wrote till they accepted the language, manners and customs and the religion of the people whom they conquered. It must have been a period of good magnitude, covering no less than three hundred years. Suhungmung alias Dihingīā Rajā (1497-1539) appears to be the first Ahom king to assume a Hindu title, Svarga Narayan, betraying his Hindu proclivity. One old manuscript beginning with a description of the legendary origin of the Ahom kings and stopping with the account of subjugation of the Cutiyās and of conquest of the Kachāri country as far as the Dhansiri in 1448 Śak, 1526 (No. 151, D.C.A.M., p. 175) is named *Svarga Narayan Mahārājār Ākhyān*, the history of Suhungmung Dihingīā Rajā.



There nothing in the style and language to warrant that it was written about the first quarter of the sixteenth century; but the style has something in it to say that it was certainly not later than the early sixteenth century. *Svarga Nārāyaṇ Dewar Yuddhar Carit* is another work (No. 149, D.C.A.M., pp. 172-73), describing Svarga Nārāyaṇ's (1497-1539) wars with Turbak, and also the wars with the Muhammadans during the reign of Cakradhvaj Siṃha (1663-69). This at least suggests that it might be written in the latter half of the sixteenth century. It also contains copies of some letters passing between the officers of the two parties. The language and style of this chronicle appear to have some smoothness and mobility of their own. A third chronicle, *Svarga Nārāyaṇ Dew Mahārājār Janma Caritra* again opens with the legendary origin of the Ahom kings, and after clearly describing all the important events and dynasties of Nara kings, Mantaras, Kacharis, Jayantiyas and Chutiya, concludes with an account of the sacred places of Gauhati as ascertained under the orders of king Rudra Siṃha (1696-1714). This work clearly belongs to the first quarter of the eighteenth century. (No. 150, D.C.A.M., pp. 173-74).

**EPISTOLARY PROSE:** As early as 1477 Śak, 1556, King Nara Nārāyaṇ (1540-84) addressed a letter to the then Ahom king Sukhamfa alias Khorā Rajā (1552-1603), which, curiously enough, is oft quoted as the first sample of Bengali prose, and which reads as follows:—

"Likhanam kāryanca. Ethā āmār kuśal. Tomār kuśal nirantere bāñchā kari. Takhan tomār āmār santoṣ sampādak patrāpatri gatāyāt haile ubhaya mukul prītir bij ankurit haite rahe. Tomār āmār kartabya se bardhatak pāi puṣpit falit haibek. Āmār sei uddyogāt āchi. Tomāro eigot kartabya ucit hay; (karā) nakarā tāk āpani jānā. Adhik ki lekhim. Satyānanda, Kāmpi, Rāmeswar Sarmā, Kāketu O Dhuma Sardār, Udhvananda Caudia, Śyāmrāi imārāk pathāitechī. Tāmārār mukhe sakal samācār buliā citāp bidāi dibā." "This is to be written. Here we are (doing) well. I always desire your welfare. When there is interchange of letters between us, producing satisfaction, the seed of mutual love gets germinated. It is a duty enjoined both on yourself and myself to see that it attains development towards bearing blossoms and fruits. We have been in that enterprise. This is also a duty bounden on you. You know whether you (do or) not do. What shall I write more? I am despatching these—Satyānanda Kāmpi, Rāmeswar Sarmā, Kāketu and Dhuma Sardār, Udhvananda Chandiā, Syāmrāi. Bid them leave direct by telling the message by their mouths." The original of this letter is not made available, and if not mutilated these appear in the form of new Bengali first personal verbs in "kari", "āchi" and "pathāitechī". But in the general tone of the letter grammatical rules followed are distinctly Assamese; and "lekhim", "dibā", "nakarā", "buli", "pāi", etc., are unmistakable signs.

This letter of King Nara Nārāyaṇ, dated Śak 1477, mās Āṣār, had an addendum (*Asam Banti*, June 27, 1901), detailing the presents sent

to Ahom king which included a pair of Cengā fish and one Sāri, besides other precious things. The Ahom king was annoyed at the trifles and told the messengers that they do not use those mean things as the Koces do (*Kochbehārar Itihās*, Vol. I, p. 105). He, however, sent a reply to King Nara Nārāyaṇ after a year by a special messenger with valuable presents including four tusks:

"Likhanam Kāryamca. Atra kuśal. Tomār kuśal vārtā śunīā paramāpyāyita hailō. Āru ye likhicā prīti briṣṭa aṅkurita seye tomār āmār sāhlādat briddhik pāyā falit puṣpīt haibār yi thān kahishā igot biṣeṣ. Kintu tomār āmār pritiṅgot yihat hante ghatiche samaste jānā. Sei rūp marjyadā vyavahārat yadi rahibā falit puṣpīt kisak nahaiba? Āmarā pūrvar abhiprāyat āchi. Āru ukilar sange yi sakal drabya pāthichilā, isakal sabhāt dekhāibār ucit nahay. Yi yi sakale yihak ācari thāke, anīti haileo ācaraniyak lai tāke nīti svarūpe dekhe, eteke dibār powā, āru sanucay sei sei drabyat pravartaniya lokar dvārāye bujuwā gaiche sei rūpe bujibā. Tomār ukilar sange āmār ukil Śrī Candibar O Śrī Dāmodar sarmāk pathowā gaiche. Esavār mukhe sakal samācār bujibā. Śak 1478, mās Āhār, din 10." "This is to be written. Here all well. I was highly pleased to receive your good news. And that you write about the tree of friendship to develop by mutual love, to bear flowers and fruits, is a unique thing. But you know the entire fact on which our amity rests. If we stay on such prestige and behaviour why should it not be blossomed and fructified. We stay on what we proposed before. And the things you sent with your pleaders were not worth being shown in the court. People using undeserving things think them to be deserving owing to their use; so you might send them, and mind that thereby you are proving them to be things used by yourselves. Our messengers Śrī Candibar and Śrī Dāmodar Śarmā are being sent with your messengers. Know all news by their mouths.... Śak 1478, month Āṣārha, day 10."

Another letter dated the 8th Fāgun, 1585 Śak (approximately 20th February, 1664) was addressed by Barphukan to Nawāb Dilāl Khān: "Sauhārdyapūrvak lekhanam prayojanañca: ethā kuśal; tomār kuśal sarvadā cāhi: āru dekhā: tumi Gadāit kari kai pathālā bole tomā prati Rustambeg Darbegar hātāt baksir katāri bhejiche: tāk tumi atyanta prapāti yugut haiā jnāpan karāibā. Ihāko tumi ki nimite kahi-chā: kintu āmār kuśalak bānchāihe kahichā. Eteke āmio tomār bacanak rākhi yemane sādār pūrvake laibār lāge tāk samaste karilō."

...ār yi kichu hastī rūpiā bāki rahiche tāk tālās karichō. Tiār kari-bāk nau pārō. Yekhan tiār hay ihāko tekhane bhejim: ār(u) imān no ki diranga haiche, yāto samaste lok ujār ei kāranehe diranga. Āmi yadi dibāk parō teve āmarhe bhār guche. Ihā kayo āmi jāno, āru dekhā tumio pūrva sīmanār nimitte vacan buli gaichā, si yemat rakṣā pāba, temat khān karibā: ār(u) āmi adhik ki kahim: āpani samaste jānā. ar tomār kuśalādi lekhia santoṣibā. Iti Śak 1585, tārikh 8, mās Fāgun." "Written with cordiality and on business. Here it is all right. I always desire your welfare. And see, you have said through Gadāi

that you have despatched presentation of knives by hands of Rustumbeg Dobeg (?) 'you will make it known being very reverential.' Why should you have said so if not for your desire of my welfare. So in keeping with your words I have received with the respectful ceremony as I ought....I am in search of elephants and money that are due. (I am) not yet able to make ready. Whenever I can make ready, (I shall) despatch it then and there. And why this delay, had it not been for all people being in famine. That is the cause of delay. If we can give, it is we who will be relieved. This is all I know. And, look, you too have given word for the eastern boundary. Do according as it can be saved. And what more shall I say? You know everything. And render my satisfaction by writing about your welfare. So, Śak 1585, date 8, month Fāgun.' The slight tinge of the new Bengali language seen in the first personal verb "cāhi", of course the only instance, is justified by the fact that it was addressed to a Nawab of Bengal.

**SOCIOLOGICAL PROSE:** The *Deodhāi Asam Buranji* with several shorter chronicles of Assam has been edited and published by the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Assam, Gauhati, first published serially in the *Orunodai* (August, 1850, to August, 1852) as *Purani Asam Buranji*. The second book, the *Bāhgariā Buranji* by Ātan Burhāgohāi, Prime Minister of Asam (1662-79). The third book, *Dātiyaliā Buranji*, manuscript of the history of the bordering countries of the Ahoms, recorded faithfully with slight deviation in the language. The fourth book about the marriage system of the Ahoms is reproduced from an old manuscript as published in *Bāhi*, (Vol. XIII, pp. 169-70). The fifth book is *Ahom Rājār Rang Dhemāli* (Pastimes of the Ahom Kings), re-published from an old manuscript as it appeared in the *Bāhi*, (Vol. XIII, pp. 402-05).

The next book is *Ahom Rājār Maidam* (the Burial of the Ahom kings), republished from *Orunodoi*, (Vol. I, 1846).—"Ei deśar svargadew sakal parakāl hale teōbilākhar mṛtyu śaril rakhār byavasthā āchil... Yadi mṛtyu hal, teōr mūre Dāngariāsakale nakai ejan Rājā nāpāte māne rajār mṛtyu bārttā ghare-pare koneo nājāne, āru koneo kaba nāpāi. Nawakai hoā janā Rājāi ājnā dilehe natun perā kāti hengul-haitāle bolāi sonpāni khatāi sei perār bhitarat kāpar-kāni tuli-talicā pāri, mṛtyu Rājār deh bharāi rākhiba pāi. Āru sei janā Rājā jiāi thakāt Tāmuli Pācani Pīkdāndharā, Hengdāndharā Jarādharā Conwādhārā Dhankhoā-dharā Chāngmāi Rāndhani Gācoa-Fulcoā ligirā eidare anekti lā-ligirā lāge, seidare marār lagat dichil. Ati kameo ei dahjan lok paricālak nahalei nahay. Sei manuh Lukhurāsan khelar āni pratijane sei ek ek bişay di marā Rājār lagat diba pāi. Ketābā dui cārijan Gharfaliā khelaro diye. Āru marā Rājār sawar perār bhār Gharfaliāi mūrar fāle Lukharasane bharir fāle laba pāi.

'When kings of this country go for next life, there had been (special) arrangements for keeping their corpses. If (a king) has died, until in his place the Cabinet ministers have appointed a new

king, no one knows of his death, in public or in private, and no one should say. Only when the newly made king orders, a new coffin is prepared, varnished with 'hengul hāitāl,' cast with gold-water, and the dead body is kept after the inside of the coffin is properly covered with mattresses and bed-sheets. And the officers and servants who attended him duly when that king was alive, were all given with the dead....In the minimum, these ten persons were inevitable. These people were collected from the Lukhurāsan clan, and had to be given by bestowing them those offices. Sometimes two or four men are given from the Gharfaliā clan too. And the coffin of the dead king should be carried by the Gharfaliās holding towards the head, and the Lukhurāsans towards the legs.'

Among other books is one styled as *Jyotiśā Rajāghariā Bāb* (how a Daibajña astrologer secured Government title) of history of Assam from the death of Jayadhvaj Simha, reproduced from a manuscript deposited at the India Office Library, London. The description is of the astrological calculations of Samudrakhari in the battle of Śarāighāt:

"Cāote cāote Bangāl āhi juriā pālehi. Lācit Bar Phukane śuni bole; 'mok pirāre bāt gharalaike ne, Bangāl kimān pāichehi cāo.' Cāritā Bhuyā poāliye cārifāle dhari bāt gharalai ānile. Pāce Phukane Bangālak khedi dharibar man karichile. Acyutānanda Dalaiye bole athan (āg) bārhi dharibalai bhāl nahaiche. Phukane bole, 'Ganak, Svargadewe nau kātōtei maye kātim.' Dalaiye bole; 'Bangāl dekhō Amara-jurir pār pār hal. Ganak, tayo katā gali: mor duryās āni cāul-kāni māriḷi'. Pāche kṣaṇek thāki Dalaiye bole; 'Svarodayat uttam pāicō. Etiā Bangālak dharibalai uthiba lāge.' Pāche bātgharar parā Kharangir Nadāir gāt dhari Barphukan nāwat uthilhi....Āmār nāo Bangālar māj somāl. Nāwar nimitte pāch-kanti diba nowāre. Bangāl bahut paril. Khedi ni Pāndur nāmat thale. Barphukane khedi yābar man karichil. Pāche Samudra Khari Dalaiye bole; 'Iār parā khedi yābalai bhāl nahaiche.' Tār parā yuddha nahal. Pāche Pāndur parā sei rātri Bangālar mājat dhōa dekhi Phukanē sakalake sāvadhāne thākiba dile. Pāchat Dalait sudhile bole Bangāle yuddhake kare ne bhatiāi yāy? Acyutānanda Dalaiye bole; 'Āji Bangālar rang he cāba lāge'.... Bangāle tāmīghar bhāngi nāwat tuli bhatiāi gal....Barphukanar kathāt sakalowe bhar dile, khedi nagal....Acyutānanda Dalaiko Samudra Khari nām di Kamrupiā kanyā eti sahite bibāh di bandi beṭi māṭi dile".

Even within vigilance, the invaders had reached Juriā. On hearing this Lacit Bar Phukan said, 'Carry me to the outer house even with my seat. Let me see how far the invaders have reached.' Four young Bhuyās had held the seat aloft and had carried him to the outer house. Then Phukan intended to catch the invaders ahead. Acyutānanda Dalai said that the auspicious moment had not come for pre-attack. Phukan said 'Astrologer, I will cut (you) before the king does.' The astrologer said, "Do it." Being prevented, (Phukan) had been getting news (of the invaders) every moment from the outer house. Phukan (again) said, 'Well, invaders have already crossed the bank of Amarājuri. Astrologer, thou hast been cut, and thou hast lost

my rice and cloth (maintenance) by getting ill reputation for me'. Then after a moment the astrologer said, 'According to Svarvodaya, I find it best (auspicious moment). Now (we) should rise to catch the invaders.' Then from the outer house, by catching the body of Nadāi of Kharangi, Bar Phukan, managed to get on the boat... Our boats had entered the midst of those of the invaders. One could not look back for (excess of) boats. A large number of the invaders died. (Others) were driven down Pāndu. Bar Phukan intended to pursue farther. Then Samudra khari Dalai said, 'It has not been proper to leave this place after them.' After that no more fight took place. From Pāndu, seeing smoke among (the camps of) the invaders, Phukan asked all to keep carefully. Then (he) enquired of the astrologer whether the invaders would fight or go down current. Acyutānanda Dalai said 'Today (we) should rather see the fun of the invaders'.... The invaders broke down their tents and getting them on their boats went down-current. Every body supported Bar Phukan and did not pursue. Acyutānanda Dalai, now re-named as Samudra Khari, was married with a girl of Kāmṛūp and had been bestowed with slave men and women and land.

**DYNASTICAL PROSE:** The history of Jayantiya from the earliest times is told in another manuscript:

"Śrī Kṛṣṇāya namaḥ. Jayanta Rājār janma kathā. Pūrve Jayanti-purat Yuddhiṣṭhirar din dhari Brāhman Rājā anek hai gal. Yuddhiṣṭhir Rājā iḥkilat Rāiasūy yajna karile, sei kālat yajnar nimittee cāridiśak prati bhrātr sakalak pathāle. Bhratrisakaleo cāridiśak jini dhansakal āgrahkai ānile. Sei belā Indrasen Rāi Bhīmak anādar kari Bhīmar thāi nagal. Bhīmeo Brāhman manejāni nāmāri....cocorāle. Brāhman Rājār anda chigil. Sei kārane Jayanta Rājār Khāsi nām thākil. Sei thāiko adyāpi Khāsiṣpur bole."

'Salutation to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The story of the origin of the Jayanta kings. Early in Jayantapur, since the days of Yuddhiṣṭira, there were many Brāhman kings. King Yuddhiṣṭhira, when he made the Rājasūya sacrifice, sent for the sacrifice his brothers in four directions. His brothers too, conquering the four directions, enthusiastically collected all money. All that time Indrasen Rāi, neglecting Bhīma, did not go to him. Bhīma too knowing him in his mind to be a Brāhman, not killing, .... dragged. The Brāhman king's testacles severed. For that reason Jayanta kings got the name Khāsi. That place is also called Khāsiṣpur till this day.'

**GENEALOGICAL PROSE:** Another manuscript dealing with the origin of the Koces and relations of the Ahoms with Kachar. Jayantia and Kocbehar. Still another manuscript speaks about rise of the Kachari kings:

William Robinson published an old manuscript in the *Orunodoi* (December, 1850, pp. 97-100) as *Cutiya Buranjī* which has been now reprinted and which begins:

"Pūrve 1111 Śakat Bhīṣmak Rājār vaṃśar Bīrpāl nāme ekjan āchil. Tār bhārjyār nām Rūpawatī. Daiba doṣat thāki Sonāgiri Parvatar āgarit praveś haila. Tāte 60 ghar Cutiyā āchil. Tār Rājā nāi. Tār bhārjyā Rūpawatīye Kuverak upāsā karichil putra kāmānāy. Ek din Rūpawatī mākar gharar parā āhote Kuvere Bīrpālār beś dhari tāye saite saṃsarga hal. Pāche Kuvere Bīrpālak rāti svapna dekhāle: 'Mor bīrjye Rūpawatīr garbhat śubhakṣane putra upajiba. Siye rājyat Rājā haba. Tār samasta sampatti hava. Rūpawatīko tai naśapibi: saṣṭame rākhibi: tayo saṣṭame rabi: Natun ghar kari Rūpawatīk thabi: Yi gachar talat Fāgunar Kṛṣṇā caturdaśit deokai mok upāsā kara, kailai prātaḥ kāle sei gachar talalai yābi, yi bastu pāwa tāke sewā kari thākibi. Gachar talat poā drabyere tor putre anakak yudh kari māri Rājā haba.' Ei buli Kuver antardhān hal. Pāche Bīrpāle cetan pāi adbhut hen jāni prātahate sei gachar talalai gal. Tāte dhāl kharga ejora, sei dhālār talate suvarṇar bīralī etā pāle. Samastake āni Bīrapāle yatan kari thale... Dah māhar ante śubhakṣanate putra janmil: nām thale Gaurī-nārāyaṇ."

'Early in Śaka 1111 there was one descendant of king Bhismaka's line, Bīrpāl by name. His wife's name was Rūpawatī. Due to providential evil circumstances he made his entrance in the front-side of Sonagiri (hills). There had been sixty families of Cutiyās. There was no king. ... His wife Rūpawatī worshipped Kuvera with the desire of a son. One day Rūpawatī, as she returned from her mother's house, had intercourse with Kuvera (appearing) in the form of Bīrpāl. Then Kuvera showed Bīrpāl a dream at night. 'By my vitality in Rūpawatī's womb, in an auspicious moment one son will be born. He will be the king in this kingdom. He will have all wealth. Thou shalt not curse Rūpawatī. Keep her carefully. Keep thyself too carefully. Keep Rūpawatī making a new house. To the tree, under which in Fāguna (month) on the fourteenth night of the black moon you worship me mysteriously, at tomorrow morning time, you must go. Worship the things you get there. ... By the things got under the tree, your son, by fighting and killing many, shall be a king.' Saying so Kubera vanished. Then Bīrapāl, getting consciousness, knowing it to be very strange, came under the tree. There (he) got a pair of shield and sword. Underneath that shield he got a gold cat. Getting them all, he kept with care. At the end of the months, in an auspicious moment, a son was born. (They) kept his name Gaurī Nārāyaṇ.'

Another manuscript is reprinted giving a history of the powerful Narā dynasty. It opens with the origin of the word Narā and relations of the tribe with others:

"Saptadvīpeswar Sāgar Rājāe Mleccha Rājāsakalak nānā varna cihna di parvat-pāhāralai khedile. Sei lagare Narā Rājāk yāto culidārhi khurāi narāmūrā kari khedile, eteke Narā Rājā bole. Seye pūrva diśat Śrī Lohityar samīpat parvatat Rājā hal. Pāche teōre vaṃśate tinitā cakṣu mahātejasvī ene etā Rājā hal. Kachārī Jayantā Cutiyā eisakale kar-bhār dichile Narā Rājāke. Svargadeweo hātī dutā Narā Rājāke dichile."



'King Sagar, the lord of the seven islands, drove away the non-Aryan kings, giving marks of different colours, to mountains and hills. Of that company, here king Narā, being shaved his hair and beard, and making Narā (lower part of rice-plants)-headed, was driven away, so he is called king Narā. He, in the eastern direction, near Sri Lohitya (Brahmaputra), in the mountains, became a king. Then in his line, with three eyes a highly powerful king was born. Kachāris, Jayantiās, Cutiyās, all of them, paid tributes to the Narā king. (Ahom) king also gave two elephants to the Narā king'.

One *Kāmarūpar Buranjī*, deals with the earliest dynasties.

"Ei Cāri priṣṭhar Rājā prathame Brahmār pūtra Mairanga Dānav: tāt putra Hatakāsūr: tāt putra Sambarāsūr: tāt putra Raktaswar. Tār pāshe bhinnā vaṃśī Narakāsūr, tāt putra Bhagadatta: tāt putra Dharmapāl: tāt putra Subāhu. Rājyat aniti anyāi kare yen dekhi Kāmā-khyāi krodh hai Kailāsak khedāilek."

"The first king of all these four *Pithas* (divisions, of ancient Assam) is Brahmā's son Mā(h)iranga Dānav. His son (was) Hatakāsūr; his son Sambarāsūr; his son, Raktaswar. After that, of a different line, (came) Narakāsūr: his son (was) Bhagadatta....His son (was) Dharma Pāl; his son Subāhu. Seeing that there are immorality and wrong committed, Kāmākhyā being enraged, drove to Kailāsa'....

TRIPURA BURANJĪ, a chronicle of Tipperah written in Assamese in 1714 by Ratna Kandali Sarma and Arjundas Bairāgi who were envoys of the Ahom king Rudra Siṃha (1696-1714) to the Tipperah king Ratna Māṇikya (edited and published by D.H.A.M.S, Assam, the manuscript, or rather a photostat copy of it being obtained from the British Museum, London) begins:

"Śrī Kṛṣṇāya namah. Ratna Kandali Arjun ei dui katakiē lekhā i Tripurā deśar kathā. Rudra Siṃha Mahārāj dewatāe Jayanta Kachāri dui deśak māri pāche Bangālār deśak māribalai udyam karile. Pāche tār deśar Maurangar Rājā: Bān Viṣṇupurar Rājā; Nadiār Rājā: Behārār Rājā: Bardhamānār Kīrtti Candra Jamidār: Bar Nagarar Udai Nārāyanan Jamidār, eisakalar thāik Barfukanar nāme mānuh pathāi sihataro mānuh anāi Barfukane mānuhat janōa rūp kari sihātār mānuhak Mahārājār thāik anāi sei Rājā Jamidar sakalalai banta prasād di hite prītipūrvak patra di āmār mānuṣ saṅgat di sihātak pathāi dile. Ei krame mānuṣya gatāiāt karāi sei sakalak baś kari lai pāche sei sakalalai kai pathāle bole: 'Āmi Hindu dharmastha Rājāsakal vidyamāne thākite yavane dharma naṣṭa kare. Ei kāraṇe sakalo ek bākya haiā Yavanak nigrāh kari dharma rakṣā karile jikhan hai tāk temre jnāt āche'. Ei rūpe sakalaro thāik mānuṣ pathāi janāle. Sihāteo anumodan karile."

'Salutation to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Written by Ratna Kandali (and) Arjun, these two envoys, it is a history of the country of Tripurā. Emperor Rudra Siṃha, after conquering the two countries of Jayantā and Kachāris (then) made arrangements to conquer the country of Bangāls (Mughals). Then of those countries, the king of Mauranga, king of

Ban Viṣṇupur, king of Nadiā (Navadvipa), king of Behar, Kirtticandra Zamindar of Vardhamān, Udaycandra Zamindar of Bar Nagar,—to them in the name of Bar Phukan, sending messengers and also getting their men to the Emperor, he despatched them again with our escorts sending presents and favours with letters of good will and friendship to these kings and Zamindars. In this manner making a transaction with and subduing them (the Emperor) informed them: 'While we the kings of the Hindu religion are here, the Yavans are outraging our religious sentiments. For this reason, all of us, being of one word and protecting our religion by torturing the Yavanas, whatever it may cost, must beware of it.' So he informed them by sending men. They too had supported it.

TUNGKHUNGIA BURANJI is one of most interesting and comparatively most recent chronicles comprising the records of the Tungkhungia kings of Assam mainly from Rājeswar Siṃha to Kamaleswar Siṃha, (1751-1806) by Srinath Duwarā Barbaruwā who mentions the exact date when this work was commenced, namely on Thursday of the fifth day of the bright moon, corresponding approximately to March 6, 1804, or four years after he assumed charge of his office as Barbaruwā. This chronicle is extremely interesting from many points of view, particularly because it was, or was caused to be, written by a responsible officer who was not only an eyewitness but even an important participator in the events of the time. He was important not alone by the different offices he himself held, but by being the younger son of Nandalal Barbaruwā and grandson of Mechā Barbaruwā, his elder brother being Haranath Senapati Phukan whose son Ghināi *alias* Badan Barphukan earned the notoriety of being instrumental for Burmese invasions.

These are just a few of the lots of chronicles scattered or destroyed and of a similar number of them made the historical bonfire of by Kirtti Candra Barbaruwā. Sir Gait writes about this event of the reign of Rajeswar Siṃha: "This king, though an able man, preferred pleasures to the affairs of the state, and left the government in the hands of his Barbarua, Kirtti Candra Gendhelā. The latter was of an overbearing disposition and soon incurred the dislike of the other nobles. The Numali Bar Gohāin wrote a Buranji in which he made certain aspersions regarding the purity of his descent. The Bar Barua disproved the allegations and on the plea that the publications of such falsehoods might cause much harm in future, and that, if it were allowed, the origin of the king himself might be impugned, obtained the assent of the king to a detailed examination of all the Buranjis in existence at that time. Those which contained anything that was considered objectionable were burnt." (H.A., p. 186).



**COPPER PLATE PROSE:** While land grants were made in Sanskrit in earlier days till the reign of the last Pala king, they used to be inscribed in Assamese on copperplates in the reigns of the Ahom kings. They describe boundaries and measures of the land granted; and has value in form. A latest sample of such land-grant copper plate inscription is of king Candrakanta Siṃha (1810-18) which reads:

"Etadvivaraṇ Kāmṛūp deśar Baruā O Barkāstha O Caudhāri O pātowari O Tālukdār O Thākuriā O gairah sakalo sāvadhāne jāniba Bāusi Parganār Atiram Caudhārie Śrī Burkā Gohāi Dāngariāk dvār kari Śrī Śrī Svargadewalai janāle: bandir pūrva puruṣ Bangālār dinar parā Bāusi Parganār Caudhāri āchil: mājate kichu kāl vaṃsaro ān gharar gotādiek Caudhāri haichil: kintu bandir anek puruṣiā ṛtti ei rūpe pūrvar fārcir mahjar dekhāi Svargadewalai janoāt Śrī Śrī Svargadewe Fārcir mahjar buji anek puruṣiā ṛtti hen jāni Atirāmak Caudhāri Pātwarī duyō biṣayā pāti tāmra patra kari dibalai ājnā karile. Pūrve ei parganār perār dhan chay māhat chaśa sāthi takā batsarat teraśa āke sthālādhikārar nikatat sodhāi putra-pautṛādi krame param sukhe bhog kari thākiba. Yadi kono kālat ān paraganār jamār kami bechi hay: ei parganār jamār kami bechi kariba nāpāy; bhagā parganā āno oparanci rahe: dhariba nāpāi....iti Sak 1738 tām. 7 Vaisākh".

"This description, of the Kāmṛūp province....officers and public, all carefully know, of Bausi division, Atirām Caudhāri, through lord Burhāgohāi, tendered His Majesty: 'this subject's forefathers from the days of Mughals were collectors of the Bausi division. Meanwhile for some time some others within the line became collectors. But of the subject, this is an office for generations.' In this manner, previous Persian documents being presented and prayed, His Majesty understanding the Persian documents (and) knowing it to be an office of several generations, ordered a copper plate to be made appointing Atiram both as a Caudhāri and Pātwarī. Earlier the total revenue for this division (was) six hundred and sixty, per annum thirteen hundred. This (amount) being paid to the owner of land (Government), till sons and grandsons and so forth, in great happiness (he) will be enjoying. If sometime, of other divisions there be increase or decrease of income, this division should have no increase or decrease. Any excess for any cancelled division must not be charged—So. April 21, 1816."

**PERA KAKAT PROSE:** Another important class of documents called *Perā kākāt* were issued by Ahom kings as a result of Census or land settlement, the latter of which appears to have been first issued by Śiva Siṃha (1714-44) from the results found at Kāmṛūp and Bakatā, Sibsagar. The following *Perā-kākāt* contains also the judgment of a certain trial in regard to a land about the Poa-makkā mosque in the Garuḍācal at Hājo in Kāmṛūp: (*Chest Paper*).

"Kāmṛūp deśar Baruā O Barkāyastha O Caudhāri O Tālukdār O Thākuriā O gairah sakaleo sāvadhāne jāniba: pūrve Bangāl āmolat Sultan Giasuddin Valvanta mrityu hoā thān Hājor Garuḍācal parvatar opare poā Mokā machidat ekam rajeat Shah Jahanar putra Muhammad

Sujāye fātiḥā kari thākibar janye di yoā māṭi mānuh āru Asamī āmol halat Sandikai Barphukane pare Darangī Rajāi di yoā māṭi mānuh ei sakaloborat ali-bandhā haiche ye Śrī Śrī Kamaleśwar Siṃhai śuni rāj-mantri Śrī Burhā Gohāi Dāngariak Bahariā Rudra Katakik pathāi Śrī Barphukanat ājnā karāi Phukane sajati katakie Mokālaike gai māṭi mānuh buj bicār kari āhi Śrī Burhā Gohāi Dāngariāt janālat āhi Śrī Burhā Gohāi Dāngariāi Sujāi di yoā mahjarboro āgalaike niāi Majundār Baruāk āgat thai deśi bideśi pārci parhār mukhe sei mahjarbor śuni mahjaro jirṇa akṣaro ure fatā citā yorā diā dekhi āru sakalobor māṭi mānuh Pirhar nām noloāt Halmaurluk nāme oloāt tāte sandigdha janmi Śrī Śrī Svargadewalai janālat Śrī Śrī Svargadewe dharma thānat āli bandhā hwā yukti nahay yen dekhi sakalobor māṭi mānuh pīrar raujā āru Mōkkār nāme Siddhanta mahjar patra kari dile. Iti Sak 1726, 21 Māgh.” (Bāhi, XV, 1; pp. 56-58).

‘Of Kāmrup province... all officers and public, all carefully know: Previously in Mughal days, the site of Sultan Giasuddin Valavanta’s burial about the Poā-Makka mosque beyond Garudācal (hill) at Hajo, land and men given by a document by Muhammad Sujā, son of Shah Jahan, and by Sandikai Bar Phukan in Ahom rule, later also by the (Koc) king of Darrang, being heard (said) to be (used) for construction of roads, king Kamaleswar Siṃha authorised the Prime Minister, who again getting an order from Bar Phukan sent Rudra Katakī of Bāhparā who went to (Poā) Makkā, enquired of the land and men and informed the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister got the Persian documents given by Suja, now in a wretched condition, got them read by Persian readers, native and foreign, got suspicious by finding the name of Halmurluk, and nowhere the name of Pirha, and informed the king who finding it unreasonable to construct roads in a religious place, made a document giving the land for (Poā) makkā...” So. 1805, February 15.

**SLAVE SALE PROSE:** Still another class of documents, showing that buying and selling of slaves in Assam had been prevalent, known as *Mānuh becā kākat* (slave-sale-papers) was in vogue also in Kamaleswar Siṃha’s reign (1795-1810). One such paper is dated about January 11 of 1800 .

“1721 Pushar chari din thakāt kubja bāre: Śrī Śrī Kamaleswar Siṃha Mahārājar rājyat mānuṣar kray-bikray kare: Sala Guriā Sādhu Ātā kine: Lerelu Saikia Siddhibar ihāte samanvite kuri gayāi bece: Mohanak rūp chataka. Atārthe sākhi Tangacu Dekā kalāi. 1 Dhuniā Tekela 1 Gharfaliā 1 Pithu 1 Dupariā Saikiā Bahudas 1 Carachōā jārām 1 Sarār Dalai Cabar 2 Nath 1 āru anek āchil. Atha ānguli katapā... Sabhavari tāmōl pān: Ramnath Kākatir tāmōl-pān: gāmocā ekhan (Purani Sāhitya, p. 29). One Mohan was sold at six rupees. Buyers and sellers are named, and thumb impressions are mentioned. “Such documents seem to be rare” (Jules Bloch, Paris le 21-4-51).

**VAMSAWALIS**, genealogical literature, was another way in which historical literature appears to have extended itself. *Darrang Rāj-vamśāwali* by Sūryakhari Daibajna is a type of such important works

in verse, giving a detailed historical account of the Koc kings from the earliest times, written about 1791. This is one of the few works the historical accuracy and importance of which can hardly be over-estimated. It also shows sufficient mastery of the writer over poetic art. Sūryakhari is known to have been a renowned scholar of his age writing several books in Sanskrit and Assamese. His descendants still holds a deed of land-grant dated 1798, evidently made by Kamaleswar Siṃha (1795-1810). The work is elsewhere quoted.

Another work of this class is the vamsāwali of the kings of Rāni by Rājā Upendra Siṃha who wrote the first 339 verses and Mādhav Dviya who completed it upto 445 verses by the order of Raja Kharga Siṃha. (No. 156, D.C.A.M., pp. 181-83). The origin and history of the kings of Rani, as narrated: King Bhagadatta first settled five families of Brāhmins belonging to the Kāśyap, Sāndilya, Bharadvāj, Upamanyu and Parāśar Gotras in his kingdom, with land-grants etc. Dharma Pāl, a descendant of Bhagadatta established his capital at Dabai Sasan which later on was victimised by a partial deluge. Thence emerged three sisters Dharmayantī, Ayantī and Jayantī, the eldest of whom became the queen of the Gāros and established her capital at Rāni so named after her daughter Dhani Rānī. Ayantī settled herself at Barduār, and Jayantī established the kingdom of Jayanta after her own name. Dhani Rānī's son Mān Siṃha later came to rule at Rāni and his gallant services in the wars with the Muhammadans were recognised by the Ahom king by the grant of several villages. Makardhvaj, a great-grandson of this Mān Siṃha, was put to death by the then Barphukan and with orders from the king, and his son Sundar Singh was installed a chief in his place. The work closes with such lines:

Racila Mādhav Dviye śuna tattva sār:  
Loksava maji thāke sāgar apār.  
Tāhār tāran hauka yena Hari nām:  
Hṛdaye bāndhiā lowa nām abisrām. 444.  
Ito Rāj vamsāwali janma Ganeśar:  
Mīsalāiā raci ācho dekhi sāratar. 445.

SCIENTIFIC PROSE: Besides the Vaiṣṇavite and historical branches by which the religious and secular literature of the period may be named, there is a second branch of secular literature no less important by its position, if not by magnitude. It is the scientific works like *Hastīvidyārṇava* and *Ghorā Nidān* which form a continuity of scientific literature with such works of arithmetic and astrology of the previous period. *Hastī-Vidyārṇava* is a treatise on elephants, their diseases and treatment, written in a happy Assamese prose style by one Sukumar Barkāth and very beautifully illustrated by one Dilbar and one Dosāi

by the order of king Śiva Siṃha (1715-44) and queen regnant Ambikā Devi (1732-39) in 1734 as the following colophon declares:

"Gambhīr dhīr dhārmiksakalar madhyat śreṣṭhatar Saumār Pīthar Īśwar Śrījut Śrīmantā Siva Siṃha nāme yi Mahārāja āru tāne mahiṣī Śrī Śrī Ambikā nāme Mahādevī: sei dui janar ājnā ratnamālāk śīrat dhari Sukumar Barkāthe ei Hastividyārṇava sār-sangrahaḥ racile. Śak 1656. Āte citra karibalai ājnā karile Dilbar Doṣāi dui likhakak."  
 "On Hastividyā see F. Edgärtā "The Elephant Lore of the Hindus. (*Mātangalatā*), Yaler University, 1931. and Fillizal's *Gaja Śāstra. Journal Asiatique*, 1934, pp. 163-175.—J. B. Paris, 21-4-51."

Assam even as Prāgjyotiṣa in the days of the Rāmāyaṇa was famous for its elephants till almost recent times, and we know from this earliest epic that Raghu, a forefather of king Rāmacandra of Oudh, got his elephants from Prāgjyotiṣa. The old copperplates show that almost all the kings of the line of Naraka and Bhagadatta used the picture of an elephant in their seals as a common mark of the line till about the last Pala king of Kāmarūpa. So it is no wonder, but simply natural, that such treatises on elephants must have been written in this country even from the earliest times. "The original author of the oldest Indian treatise on elephant training and the diseases of elephants, the Hastyāurveda ascribed to Palakapya, a work compiled during the Sūtra period (600-200 B.C.) is described as a man from where the Lauhitya (Brahmaputra) flows towards the sea." (O.D.B.L., pp. 70-71).

HASTIVIDYARNAVA: (No. 55. D.C.A.M., pp. 65-67) originally contained 193 folios of which only 135 folios now exists, others missing. "The folios are profusely illustrated with illuminating paintings of superior skill and workmanship, representing various types of elephants and scenes from the Āhom Royal Court. Some of the pictures are of great artistic and historic value, as they depict how the Āhom kings used to hold their courts and how the game of falconry was played in the presence of the kings and how an Āhom king rode an elephant in procession. The pictures are in water-colours and a large number of them are gold-plated." As regards the text, the first 163 folios used to deal with the different types of elephants "with their peculiar traits and characteristics and their good and bad points according to Āhom, Hindu and Mussalman writers. It contains elaborate instructions about how an elephant should be tamed, how the Āhom kings displayed their elephants during a war and how the age of an elephant can be ascertained from its height. The part of the Puthi which deals with the treatment of diseases, contains several mantras in the Āhom language, besides numerous recipes". In the Āhom reign there was a class of officers

called *Hatī Baruwās* to look after elephant welfare. The language and style of *Hastividyaṛṇava* are simple, idiomatic and lucid almost without any archaism. It begins with such lines:

"Parvatar parā olāi āhi sonar śar pahu pānir mukhat katāli khālehi. Sei pahure parā kato din thāki dantāl mākhundi chatā hātī hai hābit ban pachalā khāi fure, sakal jurie gunjari fure. Tār parā anek lākh bilākh hātī hal". It closes with such lines: "Nadī pār hoā bāghar māṃśa guti pit laba: maṭa bhāluka māṃśa guti pit laba: Cikā-mārī laba: yi hastir baliā literā gandhāy sei baliā laba: samastake mislāi bati laba: yetiā hasti jujhabalai niye ei auṣadh kapālat ghasiba. Gondha matrate hasti palāi. Ake Mangalbāre Deobāre hastir khin kumbhat ghāsile kumbha pūr hay."

GHORA NIDAN: A parallel, to some extent at least, of *Hasti vidyārṇava* is found in the *Ghorā Nidān* written in simple Assamese prose by an unknown author. The first part of the work deals with the horse, its kinds and characteristics, colours and what they denote; points of the horse, its vices and how to cure them, instructions to the rider. The second part begins with the horse's diseases and their symptoms and treatment. The style and language of the work are even simpler and more matter of fact and forceful than those of *Hastī Vidyārṇava*. It begins with the horse's categories and characteristics direct, as follows:

"Tātakar tini jāti: Turuki tini jāti. Tānganar buku bahal: dingi dāngar. Tājir buku cep: dingi saru: tātakar bahāl. Achoari hale bicāri pāba. Kān saru hai caksu saru haba: mukh dighal haba: bhari āthu dāngar haba: dingi dighal dāngar haba: dapana bahal haba: baran eke baran haba: pakharā bā anare hak, tenehale ghorā uttam hay. Sala bahal haba: gār soja dighal haba: pokaraṭo dighal."

Another important work is *Nīti-Latānkur*, a treatise on politics and warfare, compiled by one Bagis in Assamese prose. Politics as a subject of independent study was known to India at least before the 7th century B.C. and an Assamese work *Sukra Nīti* by Purandar Pāl of about the eleventh century is often mentioned. The colophons give some clue to the writer:

"Nītir sāgar ito śāstra manohar:  
Tānka parhi śuni jñānī howe (sava) nar.  
Jayatu Kamaleswar Siṃha narapati:  
Bisuddha sewak Pātra-mantrī samanviti.  
Rāj-jananīr ājnā yatne śire dhari:  
Bhanati Bāgis Dviṇa bolā Hari Hari."  
"Bhanati Bāgis Kavi Suryar tanay:  
Ghoṣioka Rāma Kṛṣṇa sabhāsada cay."

Evidently this work was written by the advice of the royal mother sometime about the close of the eighteenth century in Kamaleswar

Siṃha's reign. The writer's quotations from Magha and Amara, besides from the Pancatantra and the Mahābhārata testify to his vast scholarship, and the work is divided into as many as eight sections dwelling on different phases of politics. It furnishes a good sample of Assamese prose of the close of the eighteenth century.

#### IV. PROGRESS OF ORAL FOLK LITERATURE

**AJAN FAKIRAR GIT:** One interesting contribution to Assamese oral literature, belonging to this period is the Jikirs or the songs said to be composed by one Muhammadan poet known as Ājān Fakir. One particular Jikir which is often mentioned as referring to this writer and to the possible date of composition of these songs is:

Dah śa dukuri, nabisan Hijiri, ākau pāc bachar yāy:  
Shāh Milane, ei jikir karile, korān kitābat pāi.

This says that Shah Milan (?Ājān Fakir) composed this (? particular) jikir in 1045 Hijri corresponding to 1636 A.D. which time is covered by the reign of Pratap Siṃha *alias* Burhā Rajāh (1603-41). This is usually supplemented by another jikir:—

Dikhau nair kāṣari, Huāguri Cāpari, Rajāi sajāi dile math:  
Chakuri bhakate, lay Āllār nām, mādiri banare kath.

This means that the king built a monastery (? mosque) in some place called Huāguri (? Salaguri) where as many as 120 devotees of God offered their prayers. Then many questions arise in this respect. How are we supported to say that Shah Milan and Ajan Fakir are one and the same person? What could the first mentioned Jikir mean when we know that there is no written work on Jikirs? And who this king could be that built a monastery (? mosque) on the bank of the Dikhau for praying to Allah?

Whoever else it could be, it could not be Pratap Siṃha (1603-41) who built a mosque, if it so meant at all, for Muhammadans to pray on the bank of the Dikhau. For Pratap Siṃha's relation with the Muhammadans was far from happy. Besides, about this time, there could be no question of any Muhammadan coming to upper Assam, since Pratap Siṃha even carried war into the then occupied Muhammadan territories: "His troops soon reduced the Muhammadan forts at Deomiha, Bantikot, Chamaria and Nagarbera, after which they entrenched themselves at Paringa, on the bank of the Kulsi river and at Niubiha, which had been evacuated by the Muhammadan garrison on their approach. In the course of the operations a Musalman general and many soldiers were killed and a great quantity of booty was captured. Hajo was now invested, and the Muhammadans were defeated in several engagements

in one of which they lost 360 cannon and guns, as well as other stores." (Gait's H.A., 2nd edition, p. 112).

**HISTORICAL INQUIRY:** "It is recorded in one of the Buranjis that a Feringi or European, in the service of the Muhammadans was captured and sent to the Ahom king. This is the first instance recorded of a European entering Ahom territory.....The same night the Ahoms with nearly five hundred ships attacked the hostile fleet and gained a decisive victory. Muhammad Salih was killed, Bayazid was made prisoner and the greater part of the fleet fell into the hands of the victors.....Hajo was closely invested by the Bar Phukan and Dharma Narayan. All supplies were cut off and the defenders were reduced to great straits....Abdus Salam agreed to surrender, and he and his brother went to the Ahom camp with a considerable portion of his forces. They were at once arrested and taken before Pratap Singh, who ordered them to be sent up country. The leaders were sttled at Silpani and other places, and were given land and slaves, while the common soldiers were distributed as slaves among the Baruas, Phukans and other Ahom nobles. Saiad Zainul-abidin, with the rest of the garrison, refused to give in. They made a gallant attempt to force their way through their enemy, but were all killed. A great quantity of loot was taken at Hajo, including two thousand guns and seven hundred horses. The brick buildings which the Muhammadans has erected were all levelled with the ground.' (*Ibid*, pp. 113-14).

Among the brick buildings that were demolished by king Pratap Siphah might be a mosque erected by Hussain Shah about which Sir Gait writes:—"The Muhammadan accounts of Hussain Shah's invasion are very brief, but it appears that after sacking Kamatapur he reduced the country as far east as the Bar Nadi and left his son at Hajo as governor of the conquered territory. He celebrated his success by the erection of a Madrasah at Malda, the inscription of which bears a date corresponding to 1501-02 A.D. Some years later an attempt was made to annex the Ahom country, and this led to the destruction of the entire Muhammadan army and the loss of the whole of the newly conquered country." (*Ibid*., p. 45).

That even till 21 years or more after the death of king Pratap Siphah any Muhammadan prominence in Assam was out of question is proved to the hilt by the following authentic record of Shahabuddin who accompanied Mir Jumla in his invasion of Assam and wrote his accounts in 1662, during the reign of Jaydhvaj Siphah (1648-63). He writes:—"As for Musalmans who had been taken prisoner in former times and had chosen to marry here, their descendants act exactly in



the manner of the Assamese, and have nothing of Islam except the name; their hearts are inclined far more towards mingling with the Assamese than towards association with Muslims. The Muhammadans who had come here from Islamic lands engaged in the performance of prayer and fasting, but were forbidden to chant the call to prayer or publicly recite the "word of God" (*Ibid*, p. 149).

Thus finding history directly opposed, and still persisting that a Jikir must be there giving some historical value to the Jikirs, some would even change some wordings in the first mentioned Jikir to bring the date a hundred years later to suit their purpose and would read:—"Eghara śa dukuri," etc. to give 1145 hijri corresponding to about 1736 A.D. bringing Ajan Fakir in the reign of Siva Siṃha (1714-44) to give him a better chance, though such mutilation affects truth and prosody at the same time. Even in Siva Siṃha's reign one finds nothing in history to warrant that any latitude was given to any Muhammadan by the king or his three queens, Phuleswari (d. 1731), Ambika (d. 1738) and Sarveswari who successively became Bar Raja or chief king, even the Ahom emblem of sovereignty, the royal umbrella, being transferred from the king. These queens were proverbially addicted to the worship of goddess and to the oppression of the Vaiṣṇavas and as such it was almost impossible that they would encourage a Muhammadan in preaching his faith. So the attempt to give the composition of jikirs any historical appearance breaks like a house of cards, and it is not necessary also, since if they have any literary merit they will live on it even without any boasting of antiquity.

**POSSIBLE PERIOD:** That these *jikirs* attributed to Ājān Fakir might be composed and sung sometime in the latter half of the eighteenth century, if not later, on the decline of the Ahom power in between the quarter century of Māyāmarā rise (1769-94) or thereafter may be allowed. For as already seen, Ahom kings like Pratap Siṃha in their normal power, on no account allowed any Muhammadan "to chant the call to prayer or publicly recite the "word of God" (Gait's H.A., p. 149), and when it happened at all it could happen when a series of civil wars with the Mayamara sect of Vaiṣṇavas tore the kingdom for nearly half a century culminating in inviting the English for the first time (1794 A.D.) to suppress this rise. As on this political side, so the social side here could be a chance for such preaching of Muhammadanism, as Vaiṣṇavism till then in the full tide, now suffered such oppressions, the Śāktas securing the upper hand, somehow winning the royal power to their side. But all the same, the influence of Vaiṣṇavism was there, and any preaching of Muhammadanism could be effected only through the path paved by it. It became easy to preach Muhammadanism as



its principles were exactly the same as that of Vaiṣṇavism being sworn to serve the One and the One alone, and decrying the worship of other gods and goddesses. So this Ajan Fakir composed his verses and sang them with claps in exact imitation of the language and style, time and manner of the Vaiṣṇavas, so that there was nothing to distinguish save the use of a few Arabic words like the Vrajabuli words used by Śāṅkardew in his literature. This is how he could gain his ground inch by inch.

As regards the poet, the jikirs do not seem to present the name Ajan Fakir, but the name Shah Milan occurs so often. But in some general Assamese proverbs, we find the former name as in: "Ajan Fakireo kay: Din gale rāti hay.". This shows that Ajan Fakir was a popular name to the Assamese mass in general, if "Ajān" does not mean here 'unknown.'

This glorification of the name of God is the key to Vaiṣṇavism, and as such these jikirs would naturally be tolerated by the Assamese mass people and even the king would find nothing to object to. There are other nice jikirs which but for a few Arabic wordings are Assamese to the core in analogy, style and conception. These jikirs dwell on the temporary nature of the human body and urges the wise to secure in the meantime what is worthy and everlasting, just as neo-Vaiṣṇavism already preached. Jikirs' (Arabic *Ziqr*?) emphasis on recitation of the name of God is also noteworthy. (Neog's A.S.B., p. 551).

These *jikirs* remind us of the exquisite *dohās* or songs composed by Kavira whose contribution, in all-India literature, is too well known. Though these *jikirs* may not stand by the *dohas* glowing with the deep spiritual experiences and realisation of a master-spirit, great enough to influence such a world-poet as Rabindranath to a considerable extent, they yet show the same unity of two cultures of the Upaniṣads and the Korāṇ blending into one. *Jikirs* are expressions of a true devotee of Islam in the ideology, manner and atmosphere of a land of the Upaniṣads. Such a manner not only secured religious toleration but it also attracted sympathy from the people among whom they came to live. It is thus that the two cultures met and contributed to the great Indian culture; and the people in Assam live in perfect harmony and peace. Except in matters of feeding and marriage, the mass people of Assam even to-day are one in their corporate and social life with broad sympathies and in enjoying such time-honoured national festivals as the Bihu, which is rather social than religious.

Like the English ballads which "were produced continually from the Anglo-Saxon times until the seventeenth century" (*English Lite-*

ature, Long, p. 61), the Assamese ballads and folk-songs were composed till about the first part of the nineteenth century. After this the conditions which were favourable to the growth of such ballads and folk-songs practically ceased and those who produced them came face to face with the grim realities of life that rendered no more of such dreams possible. The most prominent factor which is responsible for a lingering of this period till the early part of the nineteenth century is the "no want, no store" formula of the economic life of the people who are predominantly agricultural, living on a most fertile soil. This together with the "simple living and high thinking" formula of their spiritual life made them still live in an atmosphere of dream and poetry undisturbed till before the twentieth century when large influx of foreigners and more spread of people have almost picked their pockets and have now left them miserable. Loss of independence accelerated by the civil wars as the Māyāmarā rebellion and other internal troubles which culminated in first approaching the English for help and the next inviting the several Burmese invasions, are also no mean factors.

JANĀ GABHARUR GĪT: The composition of the two ballads *Mani Kōwarar Gīt* and *Ful Kōwarar Gīt* though placed in the early period must have suffered large physical changes through the different epochs especially during the Ahom period the stamp of which is found in an attempt to give them "a local habitation", deluding superficial critics to think that the heroes of these ballads belonged to the Ahom reign. Any way, possibly next in order of its historical or semi-historical nature is the *Janā Gābharur Gīt*, probably having even some remote connexion and similarity of events with the ballads *Gopīcandrar Gīt* or *Maināmatīr* or *Māṇikcandra Rājār Gān* having some historical importance. It begins with the usual invocation of the Assamese ballads to the goddess of learning with characteristically Assamese simile etc.

The ballad proper begins with the story element. Janā, the queen regnant of some kingdom of Gurucar, who has some parallel in the English princess Atalanta and her race, had imprisoned, in lieu of putting to death, as many as nine hundred princes who came to marry her, in the last twelve years. Then came one Kalidhan of the Nāth community of Kampur, Nagao, Assam, to marry her, but was insulted and driven away. He went straight to his friend, prince Gopichand also at Nago, Assam, and with a view to feed his grudge against Janā, prevailed on his friend to marry her. Gopīcand at first declined by saying that he was already the husband of "naopon" (9 × 80) wives in contrast with his father who married "chaypon" (6 × 80) and hence he needed no more. But Kalidhan at last won

over Gopīcand by describing to him Janā's personal charm and also urging him to acquire merit by releasing the nine hundred princes, which he could not do unless he won Janā. So Gopīcan prepared to go, but his mother who was a widow and reared her son as such from his infancy objected to it and said that he must not be out on this dreadful excursion, and so did his "naopon" wives. Gopīcan, however, tided over all these difficulties, passed the tests set for candidates of Janā, released the nine hundred prisoners or disappointed lovers and after killing Janā's brother, prince Abhiman, and defeating her father, married Janā to live happily with her.

The story as such seems to have some historicity about it. Kāmpur, a well known place in Nagao, Assam, has good traditions of a kingdom as Garuchar or Garubang, as it is told in the tale. It does not seem proper to attempt in any way to correlate this tale with the characters of Janā and Abhimanyu of the Mahābhārata. Also there are many points of striking resemblance with the ballad *Gopīcandrar Gān*. Janā ruling as a woman even while her father and brother Abhiman were alive reminds us of the Nārī Rājya or woman-kingdom referred to in the previous ballad. Gopīcan has parallel in Gopīcandra, Gopīcan's mother, a widow, in Gopīcandra's mother Maināmatī or Mināwatī, Gopīcandra's marriage of "nawpon" ( $9 \times 80$ ) wives or of his father marrying a similar number of wives or of his father king Māṇikcandra taking "naw buri" ( $9 \times 20$ ) women to wives besides Maināmatī herself. Also the location of the events in the Nowgong district, on the boundaries of Khāsi and Jayantia hills where matriarchate system still prevails confirms us once more.

As is usual in all such cases, *Janā Gābharur Gīt* has all the stamps of having passed through the Ahom period and having some words of Ahom relationship as Puthādew (grandfather)—"Hāi di tulibar, lāi mor Puthādew, hāi dī tulibar lāi." Besides, there are words of Islamic languages as "isara" (gestures) and "jān" (life) "dīl" (mind), etc. showing that it experienced also the Muhammadan wars. As in the case of the ballads of *Mani Kowar* and *Ful Kowar*, these words may lead superficial critics to be on the look out for finding its heroes and heroines in the Ahom period, but it is useless. Constant references are found to the copper temple at Sadia, renowned as Eastern Kāmākhyā, and Gopīcan has been called a Kacharī (? Chutiā).

The ballad, collected as it was from the lips of men rough and ready, suffers as it does here and there from lack of refinement in taste, contains yet some literary beauties of high order. The ballad beautifully describes its hero and heroine. (Neog's A.S.B., p. 555).

*Badan Barphukanar Gīt* is so named after the hero of the ballad who is directly responsible for the terrible Burmese invasions of Assam. The ballad gives a popular version of all the important events of history of Assam taking place sometime between 1815-24 describing Assam's sunset or loss of independence. Ghināi *alias* Badan Candra Barphukan is the hero of this tragedy in as much as it is he who invited the Burmese into Assam with a view to avenge his rival and relation Pūrṇānanda Burhāgohāi, the then Prime Minister of Assam. *Bar Phukanar Gīt* begins with the usual invocation to the goddess of learning and to Pārvaṭī which agrees in spirit with, but differs slightly in language from, *Janā Gābharur Gīt*. Unlike the previous ballads, *Bar Phukanar Gīt*, used to be sung by persons taking to this profession for money. This practice of singing for money was not unknown even to early history of English literature down to the days of Goldsmith. The subject-matter opens with an insight into Pūrṇānanda Burhā Gohāi's character about which two opposite views are almost equally predominant. History depicts him as a self-less patriot, but popular opinion is just to the contrary of it; and the ballad under review naturally voices this popular sentiment. While the Burhā-Gohāi's statesmanship is beyond question, there is no denying the fact that he wanted to appropriate all the royal power as the guardian of the young king Candrakānta Siṃha (1810-18), and that he was jealous of the wealth and influence of his near relation, the Barphukan, so much so that while the latter gave much dowry to his dearest and only daughter Pijau Gābharu, given in marriage to the former's son, Oreshnath Dhekial Phukan, the Burhā Gohāin for his jealous nature took it amiss and thought that the Barphukan gave such rich dowry only to belittle the Burhā Gohāi, the then uncrowned king of Assam. This jealous nature of Pūrṇānanda is also pictured in the first few lines and verses.

The height of Pūrṇānanda's autocracy was that he secretly ordered arrest of the Barphukan, the governor of lower Assam, on some charges brought against him. The Burhāgohāi not only failed to make even a preliminary investigation as to the truth of the charges, but even did not care to consult the king or the royal mother about the advisability or otherwise of the arrest. On the other hand, he allured one Parvatīā Phukan with the appointment of the governor provided the latter could effect the arrest in good time. But this was not to be. This clique of the Burhagohai found that even the walls had ears; somehow the plot was frustrated and the Bar Phukan made good his escape before the Pānī Phukan could do anything to effect his arrest.

Ghināi *alias* Badan Barphukan went straight to Calcutta and sought help from the English, who due to the observance of the policy of non-

intervention, would not lend it. Then he went to the Burma king who readily sent a vast Burmese army with him. Badancandra landed on his native shore burning with revenge for Purnānanda who immediately on hearing the news committed suicide. Here the popular verdict condemns the Burhagohai who was also indirectly responsible for this national suicide: "Āru ki kathā hal; Kālhirā celeki, Burhā Gohāi narakī, rātie saraki gal." Then began the brutal horrors of the Burmese invasion, which embittered the popular feeling against Badancandra so much that he was soon stabbed to death. Then came several invasions of the Burmese, one after another, and put the last nail in the coffin of the nation's freedom. The country then miraculously passed into the hands of the English by the Treaty of Yandabu on February 24, 1826. This ballad, perfectly historical in its description, abounds with beauties of style and language which are quite dignified, besides sharing with others all the virtues of an Assamese ballad.

**LESS KNOWN BALLADS.** There are many other ballads in Assamese which have not yet been duly collected. One of such ballads is *Bākhar-barār Gīt* after the name of the hero who was a resident of Nagāo in the reign of Gaurināth Siṃha (1780-94) and was put to death on a false allegation of sedition against him. Another ballad *Padma Kumārīr Gīt*, has for its subject the historical event of Dandūā Droh or the rebellion by Haradatta and Biradatta of the present Kāmrup district, in the reign of Gaurināth Siṃha and Kamaleswar Siṃha (1795-1810). Other ballads known as *Cikan Sariahar Gīt*, *Pr̥thu Barkākatir Gīt* of comparatively recent times were also known to have been prevalent. This excludes songs connected with folk-tales as *Tejimālā* and *Pāneśai*. Another tale, may be semi-historical, is the *Kamalā Kuwarir Sādhū*. Kamalā, the queen regnant, when she was told by astrologers that people of their kingdom then in the jaws of famine owing to the dearth of rain, could still be saved if she would be ready to offer her life. Kamalā gladly agreed; a well, designed to be the source of inundation for the whole kingdom, was dug where Kamalā got down in order that water might rise up inch by inch to drown her gradually. The king was to witness this awful death of the queen, and he in a tune of wailing asked her, and she replied in the same way, as to how far the water rose up to cover her body. Such are the repeated questions and answers. The tale has its parallels also in South Indian traditions. The last of such Assamese ballads, really composed within the British period proper, is the *Maṇirām Dewānar Gīt*, its hero Maṇram being a martyr.

**PASTORAL SONGS:** Then there is a class of pastoral poetry including man's Ploughing Songs and woman's Spinning-wheel songs where

every part of the plough tells its autobiography and every stage at spinning is described. There are other songs called Hucari Nām, sung in the Bihu festival from courtyard to courtyard, with musical instruments as the drum, horn and cymbal. They are of two types, religious and secular. They consist of two parts, *Ghoṣā* (chorus) and *pad* (body of the song). The religious type are sung from the *Kīrttan-Ghoṣā* or similar books, and the secular type is composed by the singers themselves, generally extempore. It is this latter type, describing nature or saying something to the house-holder or some body in the house, that are more interesting.

The idea of Hucari connected with that national festival called Bihu, thousands of years old, is to shower blessings for the new year on every soul in every family who in return pay due respect to the Hucari-singing party. References to the joy of this sacred festival, to the beauty of nature in the zenith of spring, in the middle of April every year, and also to the different classes of members in the household with reference to the money and cloth they pay, are mentioned in these Bihu songs. (Neog's *Fāgunī-Ākul Pathik-Bihuwatī*, 1st Ed. 1922).

Iye bole ur akā, siye bole urukā, nāhar ful fulibar vatar:  
 Śiwasāgar jilāte, dholar māt sunilō, thekeci bhāngi yāo yatar.

'One says it is the eve of Bihu. Another says it is the eve of Bihu. Lo! there *Nahar* flowers blossom according to the season. The whole of the Sibsagar district resounds with the sound of the drum. Let me smash my spinning wheel and go where the drum is being played.'

Bihuwatī carāye, kare Bihu Bihu, more Bihu kāpor nāi:  
 Samaniāi sudhile, kam kie buli, sarute dhukāle āi.

'The bird of Bihu sings the tune 'Bihu', 'Bihu'; and I have no Bihu clothes. What should be my answer when friends of my age ask,—for I have lost my mother while I was so young.'

Hāto padumī, bhario padumī, choāli padumī nāo:  
 Olāi samidhān, diā ai Padumī, āmi rāij gharalai yāo.

'Thy hands are of lotus. Thy legs are of lotus. Thy name, O maiden, is Lotus. Do then come and bid us good bye, O lotus, and we the people disperse homeward.'

AMOROUS FOLK SONGS: Neog's collections *Ākul Pathik*, *Fāgunī*, *Bihuwatī* show amorous songs by young men and women and Bihu songs, three kinds apart. Besides conversing and having contests in love songs, as in Tibet or China, the amorous songs are sometimes confused with Bihu songs so wrongly. The three compilations of carefully collected and selected amorous folk-songs (*Ākul-Pathik*, *Fāgunī Bihuwatī*) show

about one thousand of them, besides another thousand perhaps, discarded as slang. These songs are usually sung by young folk, men while keeping cattle or ploughing the field, and women while fishing or transplanting or cutting the paddy, like William Wordsworth's Solitary Reaper. These amorous folk-songs vast and varied as they are, cover the Spring fields of Assam mainly from January to June, but generally all the year round, with their echoes and re-echoes: for "In the Spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love." These folk-songs have an arrangement of thought in their own way, and may almost be called an unwritten secular Gītā or secular Bible of the illiterate young. They are almost a revelation to themselves, for unlettered Vālmīkis utter them under sufficient inspiration and know not what they say. These are ideas afloat in the air, and these "mute inglorious Miltons" have caught and couched them in beautiful garb. These folk-songs are popularly known as *ban-goṣā* (wild chorus) suggesting their contents. As a matter of fact, these songs should have nothing to do with the Bihu proper and are not allowed in respected society.

Prathame pranamo, Devī Saraswatī, divitye pranamo Hari:  
 Tr̥tiye pranamo, gāwar burhā-māthā dhari-yāō nāmare guri.  
 Nāmare kathīā, Īṣware dichile, Brahmāye sarajā nām;  
 Beā nām olāle, khemibā sadaue ponate pīriti gām.  
 Chāgar chāl chelābar, dabuā katāri, pahu chāl chelābar mīt:  
 Gāwar burhā-māthā, dāy nadharibā gāi yām batarar gīt.  
 Āi Saraswatī, Devi Pārvatī tomāke buli yāō Āi:  
 Vatarar gītāke, āmi gāi yām di yābā manat pelāi.

"I bow first to the goddess of learning and then to God; in the third place, I bow to the old folk of the village, for I am going to commence singing. The seed of Nām (Word) was sent by God, the Creator grew it up. Pardon me, ye all, if there be any foul song, for I shall begin by singing of love. There is the knife with a folding handle to unskin the goat; and there is the pointed knife to unskin the deer: O old folk of the village, put no blame at my door, for I am going to sing songs according to the season. O goddess of learning, O Pārvatī, I call thee Mother: do remind me all, for I am going to sing the songs of the season."

In the *Ākul Pathik-Faguni* these songs have been classified into *Pūrvarāg* (Pre-attachment), *Milan* (union) *Birah* (separation) etc. The first of these books may begin with such songs:

Nāmāro āchilō ghāi, tai Bāndhai ai, gītaro āchilō ghāi:  
 Nāmo pāharilō, gīto pāharilō, tomāre bātari pāi.  
 Tomāre mukhani, pūrṇimār jon yen, śualā tomāre māt:  
 Tātare śālate, dekhibare parā, petalai yoā nāi bhāt.  
 Hālalai likhile mok, ai Lāhari, koralai likhile mok:



Cāri āngul kapālkhān Vidhatāi likhile, tolai nilikhile mok.  
 Tōr bārit fulile, Indrajit Mālātī, mor bārit parile chā:  
 Fulare gondh pāi rabake noārō, dei puri mārīche gā.

'I had been the leader in singing, O female friend, I had been the leader in singing tunes. Alas! I have now lost my memory for songs, I have lost my memory for tunes, the moment I have got the news of you. Your face shines like the full moon; your voice is harmonious. No food has passed my throat since the day you caught my eyes while you were still busy with the loom. Ah, I am destined for the plough. O beloved, I am destined for the hoe! The creator has written on my forehead, full four fingers in breadth, and I am not destined for thee!! The flower of *Indrajit Mālātī* blossoms in your garden and casts its shade in mine. The fragrance of the flowers makes me restless, it puts my body on the fire, as it were.'

Bargharar mūdhatē Kapau kuruliāy, sālākh Madanar māt:  
 Khedi de, khedi de ajāti kapau ai, saraṇ kher mārīche gāt.  
 Parvatat māri yāo rāngālī harinā, pelāo bhaiāmalaī tāni:  
 Hāhibar chalere, kāndī pathialō cenāik pānīghāt dekhi.  
 Catmahīā, rad chaue chaue, kino dūpariār bhok:  
 Tiyaho nahali, cirālo nahali, kecāi khālō heten tok.  
 Piriti sūdā gun, Mahangar kecā loṇ, thabā yatanere bāndhi:  
 Kibā mayā kari herāba lāgile bicāri nāpābā kāndi.

'The dove cries with a charming voice on the top of the main building. It seems like the Cupid's own call. Oh, drive away, do drive away this foreign dove, for it pricks the body as do the blades of the *Śaraṇ* grass. I have shot the red she-deer on the mountain and thrown it aside the valley. I have wept shedding tears on the pretext of laughing, by seeing my beloved on the riverside. It is the month of Caitra (spring) and the sun is so furiously hot: a hunger of the noon eats me. Why had you not been the summer fruits. I would eat you green. Love is a virtue rare as the fresh salt of Mahang: keep it well tied lest you should miss it and never get it again though you weep for it: for Love knows supernatural power (māyā).'

The part, *Fāgunī*, contains love-songs by women themselves where they have described their own thoughts. Expressions of womanly feelings as such are a rare thing in literature; for in written literature they are mostly influenced by man writers. So in these folk-songs one sees the woman's heart, particularly of those who have not yet tasted of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge.

Cāular cikūṇe, khud, ai Lāhari, cāular cikūṇe khud:  
 Dekāre cikūṇe, bharir kalāfule, gābharur cikūṇe dud.  
 Inait bure māri, sinaite olāle, kāre pohanā ud:  
 Māti futi olāle, tarāre gajāli, buku futi olāle dud.  
 Saru hai āchilō, garu rakhichilō, dāngar hai lagālō tāt:  
 Tātare śālate kulakṣan lāgile, mor dhane lagāle māt.  
 Tāt bāti karōte, nāhibi bulilō, bahi bai āchilō tāt:  
 Mor mūrkhōā, tai ye soṇāmuā, pāchar parā lagāli māt.



'Beautiful is the little grain of rice, O my dear one, so beautiful is the little grain of rice. Beautiful is the calf of the young man and beautiful is the breast of the maiden. It has dived in one river and appeared in the other: whose domestic otter it must be; the sprouts of the wild cardamom shoot up the ground, and the breasts shoot up the chest. I used to keep cows while young, and being grown up I applied myself to the loom. And while engaged in the loom, occurred the unlucky event, namely that the dear one summoned me. I warned him not to come while I was busy with the loom, and then I applied myself to it. But alas! the golden-faced dear one, who would eat my head, calls me from behind.'

The course of love never runs smooth, and so the union in love is always a temporary thing. Love is a bed of roses no doubt, but the roses are never without their thorns. It is the back-biters that poison love. This idea is expressed in a large number of songs.

Ati cenehare, fulbārī pātilō, tār mājē kharikā jāi:  
Ati cenehare, pīriti karilō, dhopāte marahi yāy.  
Yāo beg dhari, bhari yāi pichali, Badati mukhare āli:  
Kino nidārun, hali ai Lāharī, tāmōl kāti akalai khāli.  
Thuriāi thuriāi, tāmōl kāti dichili, tār mājat dichili lang:  
Molai āhim buli kāpor dhui dichili, manat lagāchili rang.  
Āpuni nākhāi, molai sācichili, Nalcuṭi cāular bhāt:  
Etiā Mainā, kone ki karile, keterā-jengerā māt.

'I had my dearest flower garden, and had planted the fragrant flower in the midst. So have I made love so dear to the heart and alas! now it nips in the bud. I walked fast and my feet slipped on the road to the mouth of the river: alas! how cruel hast thou been, O beloved, to cut the betel-nut and eat it by yourself? You used to present me with betel-nuts rolled up with betel leaves putting spices in them; and you used to wash my clothes and gladden my heart assuring that you would marry me. You would not eat yourself but would save for me the rice of the finest species. What happens now, O pretty bird, you speak so harshly to me.'

This feeling of separation gradually leads to an indifference to worldly pleasures and merges in reconciliation to lot or resignation to fate.

Lāhikai ketekīr, pāhi tai Cenāi ai, lāhikai Ketekīr pāhi:  
Bukut diye, gali jvalā jui ekurā, mukhar lai gali hāhi.  
Loake bindhile, loare māmāre, chātinālat bindhile ghuṇe;  
Cāri āngul kapālat Bidhatāi likhile, cāci bā gucāba kone.  
Cātiye bagāle, catir bar chelā, māralit bagāle sāp:  
More kapālat, yi habar haiche, Mainā tai kuśale thāk.  
Nakaribi bhay ai, nākāndibi Cenāi ai, manat sog nalabi tor:  
Ipurī ye eri gai, sipurīt pāmegai, dukharo pariba or.

"Thin are the petals of the *Keteki flower*, O beloved, the petals of the *keteki flower* are thin. You have snatched the smile from off my lips and you have left a fire ablaze in my heart. The iron has been affected by rust born of itself; the handle of the umbrella is eaten by the insects within it. So is this written on my forehead, full four fingers in width, by the Creator himself, and who is there to remove it? Over the tie-beam creeps the centipede of the beam, and over the long horizontal pole creeps the snake thereof: let what there is in my lot come to pass, but, O beloved, may you prosper. Be not afraid, shed not a tear for me, O beloved, nor be sorrowful: I shall leave this world for sooth, but shall meet you in the next, and there all my miseries will come to an end.' Only members of lower society used to collect in fields in Bihu days to sing and dance with erotic gestures. It was never a part of Bihu legitimate.

**MARRIAGE SONGS:** Assamese marriage songs too are vast in number and much varied in topics and tunes. Neog's *Nāmatī*, contains about a thousand songs thoroughly searched and selected. The topics of marriage songs are varied, because there are nearly two dozen rites and customs in an Assamese marriage ceremony for which different songs with different tunes are sung, and they are mostly woman's own composition showing their creative genius. A large majority of these songs abounds in exquisite literary beauties, and may be divided as classical and romantic, according as they describe the marriage as symbolical of mythological gods and goddesses as of Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī, Kṛṣṇa and Rukmiṇī, Rām and Sītā, Hara and Gauri, or Uṣā and Aniruddha; or as the bridegroom and bride. But while the classical descriptions are attended with a scriptural dignity, the romantic descriptions breathe a soft freshness quite their own.

There is a religious function called "Gāthian khundā" (grinding of a fragrant root) which is observed on the night preceding the day of a marriage and performed in some privacy by seven Ayatis (virtuous women having husbands and children). Both the tune and the language of the songs sung on this particular function has a serenity which is unrivalled and almost thrilling because of its mystic touch:—

Ujani rājare, gandhe gāthiane, nāmani rājare patā:  
 Kanyār māk, ati sulakṣaṇī, āpuni dhariche patā.  
 Dinat bandī hale, teji sūruje, rāti bandī hale tarā:  
 Sāto āyatiye, gāthian khundiche, uruli 'jolakā diā.  
 Telat bandī hale, telinī paruā, śālat bandī hale hātī:  
 Makarā jālate Kṛṣṇāi bandī hale nupuāy kālindrī rāti.  
 Telar meli diā, telinī paruā, śālar meli diā hātī:  
 Makarā jālat kāti, Kṛṣṇāik meli diā, puāi yak kālindrī rāti.  
 Makarā jālate, Kṛṣṇāi bandī hale, kino Rukhiṇire māyā:  
 Sāto āyatiye, gāthian khundiche, uruli 'jolokā diā.  
 Cāndo cikune, sūrujo cikune, cikun saragara tarā:

Atāitkai cikune, dekhi thai āhichō, bāhi candanare darā.  
 Bārīo nāhiba, khārīo nāhiba, āhiba svāmī suā:  
 Sāto āyatiye, gāthian khundiche, uruli 'jōlokā diā.

'From the upper country comes the fragrant root, from the lower country comes the stone slab: the mother of the bride has auspicious signs about her, and she herself takes the stone roller. The scarlet sun is imprisoned by day, the star is imprisoned at night: the seven virtuous women are grinding the fragrant root; oh, shower the ululu sound of blessings. The ant of the oil is imprisoned in oil, the elephant in its gaol; Kṛṣṇa has been imprisoned in the spider's web, and the dark night never dawns. O, release the oily ant from oil and the elephant from the gaol; break the spider's web to release Kṛṣṇa, and let the dark night dawn. What spell must Rukmiṇī have known that Kṛṣṇa had been ensnared in the spider's web! Ye all, shower the auspicious sound of ululu, for the seven virtuous women are grinding the fragrant root. The moon is beautiful, the sun is beautiful, and beautiful are the stars; but the most beautiful of all things we have seen is the bridegroom that looks as sandal paste kept last night. No widow should come, no barren woman must come, but those with blessings for the husband must come: O, shower the auspicious ululu sound, for the seven virtuous women grind the fragrant root.'

Besides marriage songs describing the personal beauties of brides and bridegrooms and their clothes, there are others that describe the arrangements of the festival with their merits and demerits. Still other songs there are that picture the personal sentiments of the bridegroom or the bride:

Cāul cāri purā, katno erilā, cirā cāri purā pāi:  
 Cenehar saru bhāi, katno erilā, bhārjyār bātari pāi.  
 Parhilā śunilā, sadau pāharilā, ākau Rām Gangālai galā:  
 Mārak puhibare, eko cin nāpālō, mālā lai barāgi halā.  
 Āgeye Rāmcandra, kai furichilā, bhārjyā nālāge buli:  
 Homare guri pāi, lalā ocar capāi, mor prāṇesvarī buli.

'Where have you left the four *purās* (60 seers) of rice on finding four *purās* of fried flattened rice, and where have you left your dearest youngest brother on hearing the news of a wife? You have studied a good deal, but you seem to have forgotten every thing: we see no sign of your looking after your mother; for, O Ram, you look like an ascetic detached from the world, with the rosary on and ready for a pilgrimage to the Ganges, as it were. You used to say before, O Rāmcandra, that you never want a wife; but lo! sitting about the sacrificial fire you have pulled her nearer calling her the goddess of your life.'

The personal sentiments of the bride are pictured even more profusely and in various ways and tunes so much so that most of the audience often fail to refrain from shedding tears. Their touches are fine and artistic, and tunes melodious and varied. It is next to im-

possible in a translation to bring home to the reader, not familiar with the sweet simplicity of an Assamese home-life, the crowded associations of beauty that a single of such folk-songs awakens.

Kāli etebeli, āchilā Āidew, mārār pālengat sui;  
 Āji etebeli, yābalai olālā, śarīlat ekurā jui.  
 Āgeye kakāidew, kai furichilā, Āidew katabār khāi;  
 Etiā kakāidew, coā man kari, barghar śudā hai yāy.  
 Āgbārī śuanī, kākinī tāmole, pichbārī śuanī pāṇ;  
 Barghar śuanī, jiyarī choālī ulīai dibalai tām.

'Yesterday, and about this time, O dear Lady-daughter, you had been happy in the embrace of sleep in your mother's sofa; and today about the same time, your body is on fire as it were, for you are prepared to leave this house. Hencebefore, O dear brother, you used to complain of your sister eating many a time in the day; and today, O dear brother, mind, how a void has been created in your main house. The front garden is beautiful only by tall betel nut trees; the back garden is beautiful only by betel leaf plants; and the main house in the compound is beautiful only by grown up girls: ah, how hard it is to part with them.'

This flood of tears on parting with the bride not only affects the human audience, but also wash away all inanimate objects concerned like the beasts and plants that were moved sore with the feeling of separation at Sakuntala's departure from the hermitage to her husband's place.

Ucupi ucupi, nākāndā Āitī, āmār puri āhe hiā:  
 Putra halāheten, rakhāi thalōheten, kikāi diō Mādhavat biā.  
 Śālate kāndiche, letāi cereki, mārālat kāndiche māke:  
 Samājar mājate, pitāidew kāndiche, kelei kāndiba lāge.  
 Kāndote kāndote, caku ukhahile, kām-samanīā bhanī:  
 Bārīr piche fāle, kānde tātaśāle, Āidewk biā dibā śuni.

'Sob not so often, O dear Lady-daughter; for then we feel our hearts ablaze. Had you been a son, you could be at home; why should we have given your hands in marriage to Mādhava? The reel and the spool weep in the loom; your mother weeps in the circle of women, and in the assembly of men weeps your father, and why should he? The eyes of your sister, equal to you in growth, swell with weeping, and back in the compound wail your loom hearing the news of giving you away in marriage.' Other marriage songs called *Jorā-Nām*, bring comic relief and are sung to cut jokes either with different relations of the bride or bridegroom for this or that or no fault at all, and others attacking the bride or bridegroom's party, one by the other. These jokes are sometimes mild, sometimes brutal, and sometimes culminate in a regular quarrel. Some of these unlettered Assamese women poets had such gifts of fine composition that they could pass away the night making songs extempore and leading their company to sing all along. They were also known to have been terrors of the party they would

antagonise. Such songs are very enjoyable when their doses of jokes are mild and soft. The women who would form the bridegroom's party would cut such innocent jokes with bridegroom himself:

Mārār āgate, tini saite khālā, sāhur ghar nosomaō buli:  
 Āitī cikun dekhi, lacarāi somālā, kone pathāichil māti.  
 Curiā pindhība, nājānā Bopādeu, bharir kalāfule udi:  
 Rāj samājate, bahiba nājānā, mārāto nāhilā sudhi.

'Thrice did you promise to your mother that you would not enter into the mother-in-law's house; but now, finding that the bride is beautiful, you have all of a sudden entered the house: but who did send for you? You do not know, O Master-son, how to dress yourself with the *dhoti*, for your calves are bare; you do not know how to sit in a society, and you failed to learn it from your mother.'

## BOOK SIX

### DISCOVERIES OF MODERN ASAMIYĀ LITERATURE

#### I. THE PRELIMINARY FACTS OF THE PERIOD

CONSOLIDATION OF FOREIGN RULE. The Burmese invasions and misrule (1816-24) preceded by the civil wars of the Māyāmarā rebellion (1769-94) and Danduwā Droh (1810) left Asam unnerved and the morale of the people damaged, which even the seventeen Muhammadan invasions (1206-1682) and earlier internal struggles failed to affect. It is through sheer irony of fate that Asam came into the hands of the British by the treaty of Yandabu which was concluded on February 24, 1826, between the East India Company and the Burmese encroachers of British Territory on Asam borders, though Asam certainly belonged to no party. Even then Purandar Siṃha was recognised as the king of Upper Assam early from 1832 to October, 1838, or till he was deposed, and the administration of the country was taken up by the Company. Now the administration was run naturally in Assamese till all on a sudden in 1838 Bengali usurped the place at the instigation of the Bengali clerks who came to Asam for their living. Under the provisions of Act xxix of 1837, and Section 337 of the Criminal Procedure Code, the language of the soil was to be used in Judicial and Revenue Proceedings; but it was neglected in the case of Asam. The Assamese public had not yet come to themselves to claim redress of these wrongs. Meanwhile Major General Jenkins, the then Commissioner of Assam, suggested to Missionaries in Calcutta through G. E. Travelian, Secretary to the East India Government, that they might establish a Mission in the North-East Frontier province especially for the Shan and Khamti tribes; and the Missionaries in Calcutta forwarded the suggestion to the American Baptist Mission Foreign Society in Burma and recommended also that a wider field for propagation of Christianity might be created by connecting Asam with Burma. It was then William IV who was the President of the United States of America. The A. B. M. F. Society accepted the suggestion and thought it so convenient to enter into China from the west and to introduce themselves into Tibet through Asam. According to the project, Bronsons and Cutters, with a printing press, left Calcutta on country boats, as steam-engine was not yet in use in this part of the world, on November 20, 1835, and reached Sadiya on March 23, 1836, covering these 800 miles journey up the Brahmaputra in 4 months and 3 days. Bronsons

and Jacobs then left Boston in America for Assam on October 18, 1836, and they followed the track of Bronsons and Cutters from Calcutta on April 26, 1837. As ill luck would have it, the two families suffered from various ailments on the way, resulting in the death of Jacob Thomas on 7th July; and the others somehow reached Sadiya on July 15, 1837. They were joined by still others, who now came down to the valleys to preach among the plains people; and it is in this connection that they saw the wrong and injustice done by the English rulers to the Assamese language and the people. They tried to bring their sad mistake home to them, but in vain. So the philanthropic Missionaries founded the modern Assamese literature by bringing out a journal, a lexicon, a grammar, a history and all that was needed, and they were at last crowned with success after 36 years when the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal and Assam, by his Resolution dated the 19th April 1873, ordered Assamese to be re-instated in the courts and schools of Asam. But the far-reaching evil effects of a foreign tongue that retarded the progress of education and growth of Assamese language and literature unfortunately still remain.

**LOST SELF-CONFIDENCE:** The political conditions of Asam preceding the British rule left her almost in the grave yard. She was still beside herself when the East India Company took over her administration, as in joke, which even seeing she saw not. Her eyes were wide open when these self-imposed rulers let the Bengali language usurp the place of Assamese in her schools and courts, and yet she failed to see it. Thus it was that Maṇirām Baruwā (1806-58) was one of the few Assamese who were so early against the British rule, and Anandaram Dhekial Phukan (1829-59) one of the few Assamese who objected to Bengali usurpation in Assamese schools and courts. So it appears that it took at least half a century for the Assamese nation to awake from its mental torpor after the commencement of the British rule in Assam. Even today Asam has not quite come to her own. Politically she is even today a fraction of what she had indeed been. It is a tragedy that such districts as Dinajpur, Rungpur, and Jalpaiguri, which linguistically and culturally formed an organic whole with the rest of Asam, should have been cut piece-meal in the territorial re-distribution under the British rule. It is still more pity that Asam should have been robbed of Koc Behar, the thrice-sacred Jerusalem of Assam, hallowed with the holy graves of as many as three greatest Assamese Saints as Śaṅkardew, Mādhawdew, and Dāmodardew, and also of two great heroes of Assamese nationality as Nara Nārāyan and Cilārāi, and still embracing in its bosom such great Assamese Satras (monasteries) as Madhupur, Kākatkuṭā and Bhelādangā. With the narrowness of the state had

come the narrowness of the mind, which is the more pitiable. The Assamese are still a nation of lost self-confidence, frightened at its own shadow. It cannot believe its own past achievements, cannot think of being associated with anything really great. It had even taken them a long number of years to overcome the inferiority complex in Benglo-phobia after the usurpation of Bengali in Assamese schools and courts. The horrors of the Burmese invasions seemed to haunt their minds still. They appear to have forgotten that they were the nation, the only nation in India, who out-witted the invincible Moghul army for all the time, resisting with patriotism and heroism as many as seventeen of their full-fledged invasions, and winning unstinted praise even of the enemies. They appear also to have forgotten that it was perhaps the only instance of a province baffling all imperialist attempts to devour it, keeping itself always at a safe distance even from the great Asokan, and Maurya and Gupta empires of old. Let us hope, Assam is slowly gaining her self-consciousness and is fast coming to her own. From time immemorial Asam had tested a foreign domination only for one hundred and twenty one and a half years under the British. Let us hope, even this idea of slavery will make Assam prepared against any ill in future, and she will find herself soon among the greatest nations of India and of the world.

**LITERARY TENDENCIES:** This period of Assamese literature may roughly be classified into pre-Romantic (1826-89) and Romantic (1889-1959): and the former again sub-divided into non-Christian (1826-46) Christian (1846-89), and the latter into pre-Romantic (1873-89), and Romantic (1889-1929), post-Romantic (1929-59) periods. In the small hours of the dawn of East India Company's rule in Assam, following the Treaty of Yandabu on February 24, 1826, and terminating in the publication of *Orunodoi*, the first Assamese journal published on January 15, 1846, we have a few writers of prose like Yāduram Baruwā, (1801-69), the first Assamese lexicographer; Halirām Dhekiāl Phukan, the first chronicler of Asam, but in Bengali; Manirām Baruwā (1806-58), the first Assamese revolutionary and martyr in connection with the first war of independence (1857), author of the manuscript *Buranjī Bibek Ratna* (1938), and Kāśināth Tāmuli Phukan, and Rādhānāth Barbaruwā, who translated one Āhom history into Assamese, since published in 1844. Meanwhile, Mrs. Cutter published her 'Assamese Words and Phrases', a work of 251 pages, and before that Serampore Baptist Missionaries got the Bible rendered into Assamese by one Ātmārām Sarmā of Kalibar (Nagāo, Asam), and published it in 1813. The Sanskrit Arithmetic of Lilāvati rendered into Assame verse by Bakul Kāyastha was also published by Nathan Brown in 1845. The



only work in the verse written about 1833-46 is the *Belimārar Buranji* (History of Sunset in Assam) by one Bisweswar Baidyādhipa has since been published. To the next period (1846-89) belongs the first Assamese journal *Orunodoi* (1846) followed by a host of other periodicals, the first *Notes on Assamese Grammar* (1848) by Nathan Brown, the first typical *Remarks on the Assamese Language* (1855) by Anandarām Dhekiāl Phukan, the first *Bhāratvarsar Dandavidhi Āin* (1865) by Nidhi Levi Farwell, and the first published Assamese lexicon (1867) by Miles Bronson, all pioneer works founding the modern Assamese literature, besides a large number of school-books and Christian works in Assamese. Among non-Christian writers of this period, Anandarām Dhekiāl Phukan (1829-59), the first Assamese advocate for reinstating Assamese, and Harakanta Sarma Baruwa (1813-1900), the chronicler of a history of Assam, after Kāśināth, are the leaders. Dutirām Hāzarikā (1806-1909), the reputed author of 'Kali-Bhārat' (1862), another chronicler of Assam in verse, is the only other poet worth mentioning. The third sub-period (1846-73) saw the pioneer stalwarts of modern Assamese literature like Baruwās Hemcandra and Guṇābhirām in prose, and Ramākānta Caudhāri and Bholānath Dās in poetry, introducing English influence into Assamese literature in general, and short poems and blank-verse to poetry in particular. The fourth sub-period (1889-1909) really saw the Romantic Movement of early 19th century of England introduced into Assamese literature particularly by such high priests as Candrakumār in poetry, Lakṣmīnāth in prose and Rajanikānta in novel. There is a host of other names celebrated in modern Assamese prose and poetry alike as Kamalākānta, Lambodar, Satyanāth, Ratneswar, Hemcandra, Benudhar, Padmanāth, Durgāprasād, Anandacandra, Mafizuddin, Hiteśwar, Śaratcandra, Durgeśwar, Raghunāth who have enriched the literature in its various branches. The fifth sub-period (1909-29) with such names as Yatindranāth, Sūryakumār, Padmadhar, Ratnakānta, Ambikāgiri, Dadīnāth, Dimbeśwar, Sailadhar, Mitradew, Daibacandra, Binandacandra, Atulcandra, Kamaleswar; and the sixth sub-period (1929-59) with such names as Nalinibālā, Jyotiprasād, Nilamani, Devakanta and their train are still living and thriving in modern Assamese literature.

## II. GERMINATION OF MODERN PROSE

**A. B. M. F. SOCIETY:** It was when William IV was on the throne of England, and Andrew Jackson was the President of the United States of America, that Major-General Jenkins, the then Commissioner of Assam, suggested to the Missionaries in Calcutta, through C.E. (later Sir Charles) Travelian, the then Secretary to the East India Govern-

ment, that they might as well establish a Mission in the North-East Frontier Province, especially for the Shan and Khamti tribes. These Missionaries, in turn, recommended this suggestion to the American Baptist Mission Foreign Society in Burma with a further suggestion that it might be worth while to create a wider field for the propagation of Christianity by connecting Assam with Burma. The latter of course embraced this opportunity presently considering how convenient it would be to get into China from the west, as also to enter Tibet through Assam. (N. P. Mason's *These Seventy Five years*, (1911); Benudhar Rājkhowā's *Sāhitya Praveś* (1897); Assam Mission's *Nowgong Jubilee Publications*, 18th to 29th December, 1886).

This idea was first materialized and the plan executed when Rev. Nathan Brown and Rev. Oliver T. Cutter with their families and with a printing press left Calcutta for Assam on the 20th November, 1835. Just to fancy those days without aeroplanes and motor-cars and even without railways and steamers. It was by Indian boats that they travelled to the far east along the mighty Brahmaputra, this long 800 miles against the current, to reach Sadiya on the 23rd March of the following year. They did not stop for a single day on their way save that at Goalpara they picked up a Shan teacher as pre-arranged by Major-General Jenkins. Thus landing at Sadiya they had not a moment to lose, and they started their propaganda and printing work at once among those hill-tribes. Even within a month and a half, by the 7th June, 1836, Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Cutter opened two schools for boys and girls respectively. (*Ibid*).

It was an example that others were soon to follow. On October 18, 1836, Dr. Miles Bronson and Rev. Jacob Thomas, with their families, set out for Assam from the far-off city of Boston in the *New World*. After reaching Calcutta, they started the same way for Sadiya as their predecessors, the Browns and Cutters, had done, on the 26th April, 1837. But they were unfortunate and were all taken ill even on board their Indian boats, and Dr. Bronson happened to be the worst victim. Sadiya, their destination, was yet ahead of a week's journey. Seeing his friend in a serious condition, Rev. Jacob Thomas took a smaller country-boat to try to get some medicine for his friend from somewhere in the neighbourhood. But, alas! while thus rushing against the current, they saw a big tree on shore falling on the smaller boat and immediately consigning Rev. Jacob Thomas to the bottom of the Brahmaputra, then full to the brim. It was the 7th July of 1837, and the rest landed at Sadiya safely a week after, on the 15th July following, and joined the Browns and Cutters. (*Ibid*).

Dr. Bronson soon left for Jaypur nearby, and began propaganda-work among the Siongphos. But early in January, 1838, the furious Khamti people raised a rebellion, burnt houses and villages, and cruelly put the English officer of the place to death with their poisoned arrows. Rev. Mr. Brown and his family made a hair-breadth escape to join the Bronsons at Jaypur, the Cutters already leaving the place in quest of health. Dr. Bronson then made for the Naga Hills in 1840, leaving Rev. Mr. Brown and Rev. Mr. Cutter in the charge of Jaypur area, and stayed at Namchang to preach among the Nagas. In this year, Rev. S. Barker with his wife and Miss Roda Bronson joined their predecessors at Jaypur, Miss Bronson now accompanying her brother to Namchang. Here at last they were both laid up with illness and returned to Jaypur where Miss Bronson died towards the fag end of the year 1840. (*Ibid*).

Experience, the best teacher, had taught these Missionaries meanwhile that they might really be much more successful if they began their preaching right among the Assamese population of the Valley. Since 1841, they, therefore, began to expand the sphere of their activities throughout the length and breadth of Assam proper. In May of this year Mr. Barker left Jaypur, where he stayed for a year, for Sibsagar, where he was joined by the Browns and Cutters soon after. There being another rebellion in Jaypur, and this time raised by the Nagās, in October 1841, Dr. Bronson left for Nowgong where, subsequently, he settled permanently, and along with the work of preaching started an orphanage in 1843. Mr. Barker left Sibsagar the same year and staying at Tezpur for some time settled at last at Gauhati, and became the father of the Gauhati Mission. It is sad to say that this young man paid the debt of nature on the 31st January, 1850, when his age was 42 years 10 months and 4 days, on board the ship which was bound for America. Dr. Bronson then went to Gauhati to take his place. (*Ibid*).

**CHOICE OF LITERARY VEHICLE:** The grand idea, which prompted the Serampore Missionaries like Carey and others to take up the Bengali language as a vehicle for their work of preaching, actuated also these American Missionaries to take to Assamese. Indeed, these eagle-eyed Missionaries rightly saw that no idea could ever be brought home to any people save through their mother-tongue. So even the Serampore Missionaries, after proceeding with their work in Bengali, also kept an eye on Assamese to preach Christianity in Assam. With this aim in view the Serampore Missionaries, as early as 1811, are known to have availed themselves of the services of one Ātmārām Sarmā of Kaliābar in Nowgong, and got the Old Testament of the Bible trans-

lated into Assamese by 1813, when it is said to have been first printed and published. The Gauhati Mission preserves only the second edition of this Serampore Bible in Assamese, printed in 1833.

The American Missionaries had, however, found a knotty problem in following the royal road. The very year, 1836, in which they set their foot in Assam, the Assamese, through an irony of fate, ceased to be the language of the courts and schools of Assam. It is a fact that when about this time the East India Company took the administration of Assam, a large number of Bengalees for their living came to this province as clerks and they were totally ignorant of the language of the soil. They happened to catch a word or two of Sanskrit origin from the lips of the people and, failing to make any head or tail of the rest of their vocabulary, chose to call it at random a patois of Bengali and advised the rulers, who were then equally innocent of the language, to replace it by the Bengali language. It was the matter of a minute as it was the question of whims; and the mischief was done. It was, indeed, a Hiimalayan blunder.

The American Missionaries of philanthropic disposition now naturally took up this cause and did their level best to bring home their folly to the authorities. But it was no pen-knife passing through butter. It is true that Assamese language had a very brilliant ancient literature. But were the books printed? Printing of Assamese books at that stage was out of the question. The people were just heaving a sigh of relief after a long period of internal struggles in the kingdom, though independent, and after the Mayāmāra rebellion, long and lingering, and the several savage invasions by the Burmese. Most of the manuscripts were lost or destroyed in these calamitous times, and what remained were scrupulously guarded mainly for an idea of religious sanctity, for they were mostly religious books: to allow them to be profaned being touched by anyone in any way was counted a sin, and to permit them to be printed was considered downright sacrilege. Then there were old manuscripts on history, but they might not be deemed enough for recognizing Assamese and reinstating it. There was not one modern book, and it could not be till then, not a dictionary or a grammar of the language, not a magazine or newspaper, and not even an Assamese printing press.

**EXAMPLES OF SERAMPORE MISSIONARIES:** So the American Missionaries began in right earnest. They chose a parallel line to the Serampore Missionaries doing the spade-work for Bengali literature. It is told (*Bāṅglā Sāhitye Gadya*) that a Bengali manuscript written in Roman character about 1663 has been discovered in the city of Abhora in Portugal, its authoress being one Dona Antonia *alias* Princess Bhu-

shan. The Company's Press, established in 1785, was of course known as the second Bengali printing press. As early as 1788, Prassy Halhead brought out a Bengali grammar. In 1818 the Serampore Missionaries published the journals *Digdarsana* and *The Gospel Magazine*, succeeded by *The Brahmanical Magazine* edited by Rājā Rāmmohan Roy in 1821, and many others. The *Bengal Gazette* edited by one Gangadhara Bhat-tacharyya in 1816, *Srirampur Darpaṇa*, published in 1818, *Kaumudi*, edited by Rājā Rāmmohan Ray, are the few pioneer Bengali newspapers. Then Carey is one of the founders of Bengali prose, as Rājā Rāmmohan Ray is the father of the Bengali prose (Rameścandra Dutt's *Literature of Bengal*). Carey's *Kathopakathana* and Rāmarāma Basu's *Rājā-Pratāpāditya-Caritra* were pushed through the press by the Serampore Missionaries in 1801 along with a Bengali translation of *Hitopadeśa* by Golokanatha Sarma. Other Bengali publications of this time are *Vatrishā Singhasana* by Mrityunjaya Vidyalankara printed in 1802, *Aesop's Fables* rendered into Bengali by Tarincharana Mitra under the directions of Dr. J. Gilchrist and printed in Roman character in 1803, *Rājāvali* printed in 1808, Carey's *Itihāsa-Māla* printed in 1812, Hara-prasada Roy's *Puruṣaparīkṣā* and Rājā Rāmmohan's first Bengali work *Vedānta Grantha* printed in 1815, *Hitopadeśa* and *Pravodha Candrika*, printed in 1833.

Then the first Bengali book by Carey or Rāmarāma Basu printed in 1801 is ahead of the first Assamese book of Ātmarāma Sarma, printed in 1813, by twelve years, but it was printed by the Serampore Missionary Press. This was not all. One of these Serampore Missionaries, Robinson, brought out one grammar of the Assamese language in 1839 and published a short history of Assam in 1841. It was after this, as we have seen before, that the American Missionaries began to settle in the plains in the midst of the Assamese population by retiring from among the surrounding hill-tribes. It was the Barkers and then the Browns and the Cutters, we said, who came to settle in Sibsagar, and it is due to their efforts that the printing press was duly established there by 1844. It was in this very year that they printed the first *History of Assam* compiled by Kāśinātha Tamūli Phukan and Rādhā-nātha Barbaruwa, and published two years hence, in January, 1846, the first Assamese journal, *Orunodai*, edited by Rev. O. T. Cutter. It was a monthly paper, profusely illustrated by blocks, cut in wood by Assamese labour, from pictures of *The Illustrated London News*. It was a very useful and popular paper continuing till 1882. Rev. Nathan Brown published an Assamese Grammar in 1848 and Dr. Miles Bronson brought out the first Assamese Dictionary printed in 1867. Besides these, one history of the Chutiyas was printed in 1850 from an old manuscript in the *Orunodai* and Nidhi Levi Farwell's *Bhāratavarshar*

*Dandavidhi Ain* and Ānandarāma Dhekial Phukan's *A Few Remarks on the Assamese Language* appeared in 1865 and 1855 respectively.

Thus within nearly a quarter of a century, these philanthropic Missionaries from America were well-equipped to restore the lost prestige of Assamese, and they pressed the authorities more than ever. Dr. Brown in the preface to his *Assamese Grammar* challenged that it was too hasty a conclusion, indeed, to say that Assamese was a patois of Bengali, "too much mixed with the local dialect to be easily understood," simply by finding so many words common to the two languages and failing to take into consideration this most important fact that such similarities are only natural, both being derived from their common mother Sanskrit. He further argued that it was ridiculous to call Assamese an offshoot of Bengali, since Assam never came in contact with Bengalees before the Muhammadan invasion of Assam, long before which Assamese was fully established. Pushing the matter further, he added that Assamese really far excelled Bengali in grace and softness.

Rev. Dr. Bronson also delivers the same encouraging message in the preface to his *Assamese Dictionary*. He observed that Assam proved herself to be a living example of the fact that no misfortune, no battle, neither the rise nor the fall of a country, can take away the mother tongue from its people. The Ahoms, who spoke a dialect akin to the Khamtis, ruled Assam for hundreds of years, but far from destroying the Assamese speech, they rather abandoned their own dialect in its favour. The Mohammadans and the Burmese by their repeated invasions failed to make the slightest change in this speech. And now the country is under the English who, far from encouraging the local language, are divorcing it from the schools and courts. It is for the last thirty years that this unfortunate state of affairs prevails; but all the same Assamese has been current among the Assamese people as before, like the mighty Brahmaputra and shall remain for ever. So such generous and unselfish efforts are never lost, and after a struggle, in which local patriots like Ānandarāma Dhekial Phukan also joined, and which extended over a third of a century, the then Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, by his "Resolution," dated Calcutta, the 19th April, 1873, reinstated Assamese in all the courts and schools of Assam, although in practice it took more than another quarter of a century to get rid of the menace completely.

REV. NATHAN BROWN (1807-86) saw the light of day on the 2nd June in a certain town of the United States of America. He graduated from Williams College as a youth of twenty summers. Then he served as a teacher and edited some periodicals in his own country.

Later on he was appointed a Missionary and arrived at Moulmein in 1883. It was Mr. Brown who with Rev. Oliver Cutter started the first printing press at Sadiya, Assam, in 1836. Fast he became a scholar both in Khamti and Assamese, established schools at Sadiya and wrote textbooks in the two languages and rendered the Bible into them. In September, 1838, he lost his daughter, Miss Sophia Brown, in Assam; but the bereaved parents did not spare themselves the least from their task of writing, teaching and preaching. After their hair-breadth escape in the Khamti rebellion, they established their press at Jaypur in May, 1839, and undertook the work of printing in Shan, Singpho, Naga, Khamti and Assamese speeches, both in Assamese and Roman scripts. They then went to Sibsagar in 1843 and combined with Rev. Oliver T. Cutter to establish the press there whence they produced all the monumental works for the welfare of the Assamese literature, including Orunodai. In 1855, after a hard, but useful life of service of 20 years, Mr. Brown left Assam and passed the next 15 years in the United States of America. He now became the editor of *The American Baptist* and, in the political field, a prominent leader against slavery. In 1872 he left for Japan, settled at Yokahama and, mastering the Japanese language, brought out the first version of the New Testament in Japanese. On the 1st January, 1886, in the 79th year of his life, Mr. Brown, a great philanthropist, breathed his last.

Mr. Brown's contribution to Assamese literature is really unique. It is he who, amidst multifarious duties, first brought out a complete translation of the New Testament in Assamese in 1848, which saw as many as four reprints by 1873, the fourth being done after he had left Assam, and a fifth edition being brought out by the Baptist Mission in 1898 from Calcutta. Another work by him, styled *Khrishtar Vivaran Āru Subhavārtā*, was published from Sibsagar in 1854. Out of about 330 hymns rendered into Assamese, as many as 60 were done by Mr. Brown himself, and he wrote several other religious works besides. In a work entitled *The Whole Walford Kin*, he has very beautifully described his experience as a preacher in different lands and gives a vivid description of his beloved Assam among others. Mr. Brown's name is specially connected with another very important work of Assamese literature. It was he who first initiated in 1840 the move of collecting Assamese manuscripts of old, and by 1850 he collected as many as twenty of such manuscripts. The *History of Assam* printed in 1844, *The History of the Chutiyas* published in 1850, and the *Old Assamese Arithmetic* by Vakula Kayastha, owe their publication and preservation solely to Mr. Brown. He was, indeed, a living inspiration for his Missionary brothers and the Assamese literatures of the locality.



MRS. ELIZA BROWN, herself a writer, was a true companion to Rev. Brown in all his works. Besides the death of their daughter, already mentioned, they had another misfortune in their blind son whom, in a serious condition, Eliza alone had to take to Calcutta for treatment; and this was a journey from Jaypur of no less than four months down the current of the Brahmaputra on Indian boats of the old pattern. This she did to save her husband from undue interference in the discharge of his duties, on the 10th February, 1840; but even then she completed her work, *Gaṇanar Anka*, on this journey and got down at Gauhati to post the manuscripts to be printed in their own press at Jaypur for the use of their pupils. Eliza Brown published in 1840 the first story-book for juveniles in Assamese. With such sacred devotion to duty, she deserves to live in the memory of the posterity of Missionaries as well as Assamese litterateurs.

DR. MILES BRONSON (1812-83) was born at Norway of New York in the United States of America. He was educated at Hamilton and appointed a Missionary in Assam as a youth of 24 summers, and it is with this buoyant spirit that he worked here till the last. Assam was not only his main field of activities, but was also the holy ground where, besides his friend and colleague Rev. Jacob Thomas, his sister Miss Roda, his daughter Miss Maria, and his second wife and many others had their burial. It is with all these sad and pleasant memories that he worked here almost breathlessly for no less than forty years. Being driven from Upper Assam by several risings of hill-tribes about October, 1841, when he came to settle at Nowgong, the tasks of the orphanage and teaching and preaching absorbed almost all his time and attention. He lost his health for the recovery of which he left for America in 1848, being relieved by Mr. Studdard and his wife, to resume his work in March, 1851. And now besides his former works, he engaged himself to work for the welfare of Assamese literature, writing works connected with the Bible and rendering into Assamese as many as twenty psalms.

Dr. Bronson's monumental work is his Anglo-Assamese Dictionary containing about 14,000 pure Assamese words and their English equivalents, published in August, 1867, from Nowgong, as the first Assamese lexicon. It cost him immense labour and the result was that he once more broke his health and had to leave a second time to recoup it in America where he lost his first wife in September, 1869. He, however returned this time with his daughter, Miss Maria Bronson, to Assam in 1871, and ere long married the widow of Mr. Danforth. This lady too had a shattered health and in 1874 went with Miss Bronson to Burma where she died. Miss Maria, too, on her journey back to



Nowgong, died of an attack of cholera on board the ship not far from Goalpara. Dr. Bronson with a broken heart left Assam for good in 1874, when he said passionately: "I loath to depart. My heart shall stay here." Five years hence, Dr. Bronson in his 71st year departed to God on the 10th November 1883, at Eton Rapid, Michigan, leaving his memory ever green in the minds of his admirers.

NIDHI LEVI FARWELL is the first Assamese to embrace Christianity, and the last of the trio mentioned above. The Browns and Cutters at Sadiya found this smart, little boy, Nidhi perhaps Nidhirām, among the batch of pupils recruited for their first school there. He, then a lad of fourteen, accompanied them to Jaypur as an apprentice for the job of a press-compositor or so. On his expressing his willingness to be a Christian, Rev. Dr. Bronson baptized him at Jaypur on the 13th June, 1841, when he assumed his Christian name. Farwell is, by the way, the surname of some American millionaire who offered to defray the expenses for this proselyte, as was the custom. Mrs. N. L. Farwell was converted by Mrs. Brown at Sibsagar in 1844. Nidhi, according to a popular version, was originally a Hindu of a very low caste, hailing from a village called Sutar of the Kalangpur Mauza in the Sub-division of Tezpur. We cannot say anything assertively in absence of further proof, but there seems no doubt that he was a very intelligent man and of high calibre. He was well-versed in writing both prose and verse. In an epistle he is said to have described his own dear village seen after a long time. Besides his *Bhāratiya Dandavidhi Āin* rendered into Assamese in 1865, he wrote history like *Hindusthanar Buranji*, story-books like *Kani-Beheruār Sādhū* and poems like *Swaragar Vivaraṇa*, *Narakar Vivaraṇa* and so forth. In almost all that Brown, Bronson and others did, Nidhi always had a part, big or small, direct or indirect, and he may rightly be called an all-pervading substance in the Christian literature written in Assamese. Orunodai showed enough signs of Nidhi's influence.

OTHER MISSIONARY WRITERS like Cutter (the first editor of *Orunodai*), Ward and Garney deserve special mention. Mrs. S. R. Ward's *Anglo-Assamese Vocabulary* (1864), H. B. L. Cutter's *Anglo-Assamese Phrases* (1877) are useful works in the line. William Ward was a poet and translator of many Psalms. Garney was a Hebrew scholar and produced his rendering of the Old Testament in 1899. The bibliography of the American Missionaries' own works is itself long, and yet it is supplemented by many works of non-Missionary or non-Christian writers published by these Missionaries for the progress of Assamese literature, *Kāshinātha's History of Assam* (1844), *Anandarām Dekhiāl*

Phukan's *A Few Remarks on the Assamese Language* (1855) and Hemcandra Barua's *Asamiya Bhashar Vyakaraṇa* are just a few to mention. On the whole, it is a harvest of Assamese literature, for which the Assamese people must be over head and ears in debt to the American Missionaries.

Thus we find that the vast works of the American Baptist Mission Foreign Society may be divided into two classes, secular and non-secular, or into three divisions, religious, literary and text-books, and the text-books may be further classified. Some of the religious works are *Āmār Trān-Kartā Yisu-Khrishtar Natun Niyama*, *Khrishtar Viva-ṛaṇa āru Shubha Vārtā*, *Davidar Gīt*, *Nistārar Upāya*, *Kothopakathana Prathama āru Dvītiya*, *Sriṣṭi āru Pralaya*, *Asamīyaloi Dharma-Sambhāṣaṇa*, *Pavitra Avatāra*, *Musalman Sakalalai Cithi*, *Muktir Bāt*, *Pandita āru Dharmapracāraka*, *Yātrikar Yātrā*, *Tuti-Gān* (210), etc. The literary works other than those already mentioned include *Phulmani āru Karuṇā*, *Māk-Jiyek*, *Henry āru Teor Laguā*, *Aparimitācārar Pariṇām*, *Joseph Kāhini*, *America Aviskāra*, *Varṇa-Vicāra*, and so forth.

Law-books like N. L. Farwell's *Bhāratīya Dandavidhi Āin* and Ravicandra Deka Barua's *Asamar Dandavidhi Āin* and scientific subjects are treated in *Asamīyā Sikṣak*, a work published in 229 pages of the series *Asamīyā Larār Mitra* published in 1849. Geographical subjects are dealt with in *Bhugol Sikṣaka*, a work of 177 pages included in the *Asamīya Larār Mitra* and written with the help of Murray's Encyclopaedia, as also Mrs. Brown's *Geography*, Book I, printed in 1849 in the Samācāra Candrikā Press and written in imitation of Peter Parley. There are lexicons like *Śabdāwali āru Khanda-vākyā* by Mrs. Cutter, consisting of 251 pages and printed in 1840, besides Yādurām Barua's *Benglo-Assamese Dictionary* (unpublished) presented to Colonel Jenkins in 1839, and Bronson's dictionary already referred to. There are school-books on literature like *Bāre-Matarā*, *Pratham Kitāp*, *Padārtha-Vidyā*; works on Arithmetic like *Pratham Ganānā*, *Dvītiya Ganānā*, Vakula Kāyastha's first work on Arithmetic as also rendering of Sanskrit *Līlāvatī* (arithmetic), published in two parts by Rev. Nathan Brown; juvenile story-books like *Suamā Sāj*, *Āfrikār Kowar*, *Burhā Solo*, *Yuddha Nāyaka*, *Rāmagatir Kāhini*, *Rebir Kahini*, *Dhārmik Cahā*, *Vijnānar Kāhini*, *Sarukālar Dharma*, *Māuri Coāli*, *Igalar Bāh*, so forth. A large number of other works is already mentioned in other connections. Thus the American Missionaries in Assam have left a golden heritage of Assamese literature which has really been the groundwork of Assamese literature of the present time.

### III. REALITY OF AN UNREALITY IN HISTORY

**DAY-LIGHT NIGHT MARE:** After we have cited so many living instances of the vigorous existence of Assamese language and literature for at least one thousand years, it may be past one's conception to see how the question of Assamese being a patois of Bengali, not found to have embarked on its new departure from old Assamese speech before four centuries hence, could come in. But "there are more things in heaven and earth than your philosophy dreams of", and this is such an old miracle in history. This is a nightmare in broad daylight and like the nightmare too it was a reality of an unreality that was to be fought out; and it took no less than half a century to do so.

Rev. Miles Bronson in the learned Preface to his Dictionary of Assamese (1867) writes: "Assamese is the language usually spoken by the entire population of the Brahmaputra valley, and in most cases it is the only medium of intercourse with the bordering hill tribes. There is nothing to show that the Assamese race and their language have not existed in this Valley from time immemorial; and it is surprising that during the change of rulers, the oppression and misrule to which they have been subjected, there are no traces of any material change in their language. The Ahoms, a branch of the great Shan or Thai race, conquered Assam at an early period, and governed it for many hundred years, until it passed into the hands of the present Government; but scarcely a trace of their language is found in the Assamese. The Burmese, Muhammadans, and powerful Cachari tribes have in turn waged war upon Assam without affecting the language. This may serve to show the love of a people for their own tongue."

A mischievous and spiteful attempt was then made by reactionaries to explode even this Dictionary as practically a Bengali lexicon marking as many as 591 out of the first 688 words of it as Bengali. This awful analysis with the Dictionary itself was then forwarded by the Government to the eminent Bengali scholar late R. C. Dutt, then Assistant Magistrate and Collector, 24 Parganas, for eliciting his opinion, which he recorded as given herein. This shows that the scholars and men of eminence were, as they must be, always above the "provincial patriotism and national conceit of the Bengalees living in Assam" as late Sir P. C. Ray, another great Bengali, called it (*Presidential Address*, A.S.C., 1919).

**SCHOLAR R. C. DUTT:** "For the purpose of ascertaining the degree of resemblance between the Bengalee and Assamese languages....In going over some 60 pages of the Dictionary...The question I always put to myself was this—is the Assamese word, if written or pronounced

by an Assamese, at once intelligible to a Bengalee?... It will be observed that a very large proportion of words beginning with 'a' is marked as Bengalee, while much smaller proportion of words beginning with ā, i, ī and u are marked as Bengali. The reason, I believe is this, it is a Sanskrit prefix very commonly used, having a negative sense (like 'un' in English) and there are also many other Sanskrit prefixes, apa, aba, anu, adhi, abhi, etc., all beginning with 'a'.

"I have only to add that marking the words of a dictionary might indicate a greater resemblance between the two vernaculars than what actually exists, for in a dictionary every word finds place only once, and in conversation as well as in books, the short and, I may say, the familiar words, are more frequently used than the classical long-tailed words, and it is precisely in the short, familiar words that the Bengalee totally differs from the Assamese, while the classical words coming from the common parent, Sanskrit, are generally to be found in both the languages. It will just be well to mention that, notwithstanding repeated endeavours, I have hardly been able to make out even the purport of the Assamese preface to this Dictionary. I have known an educated young Assamese for many years, and I could never understand him when he spoke Assamese, or quoted from Assamese poetry." (Memorandum by Mr. R. C. Dutt, preserved in the Assam Secretariat Records, reproduced with permission.).

Mrs. S. R. Ward in her *Glimpse of Assam* (1864) records exactly the same thing: "The languages (Assamese and Bengalee) are quite distinct. No better proof is needed than the fact that a Bengalee does not understand an Assamese and vice versa. (European) Officers who understand Bengalee very well are quite at a loss when they hear Assamese, pure and simple, spoken by a villager." (Ch. II, *Climate and Language*, Para VIII, p. 12).

MOFFAT MILLS'S REPORT: During the early monsoon of 1853, A. J. Moffat Mills, Judge of the Suddar Dewani and Nijamat Adawlat, was deputed to Assam to enquire into the existing administrative condition of Assam who accordingly submitted his *Report on the Province of Assam*, in 1854, to Cecil Beadon, the then Secretary to the Government of Bengal. The Report records the following about education, etc. "A number of Bengalees came into Assam when we took the province, and from the uneducated state of the Assamese it was necessary to give them service: but there are now in Seesagur and Gowhaty many young men of high family and good character who have qualified themselves for employ, and it is most discouraging to them to see most of the high and even some of the inferior offices filled by foreigners. When I was Commissioner at Cuttack, the Government at my recommendation interdicted the employment of Bengalees, not domiciled in the country, without the special sanction of the Commissioner in Orissa, and I think the same order might with the greatest advantage be introduced into Assam..." (Para 91, p. 27).

"That the schools have not done more good is attributable to the indifference of the higher classes to instruction, but more particularly

to inefficient school-masters, and the want of proper class-books and defective supervision; but there is I think good cause for the unpopularity of our schools. The people complain, and in my opinion with much reason, of the substitution of Bengalee for the vernacular Assamese. Bengalee is the language of the courts, not of their popular books and shasters, and there is strong prejudice to its general use. It is because instruction is imparted to the youths in a foreign tongue that they look only to Government for employ. Assamese is described by Mr. Brown, the best scholar in the province, as a beautiful, simple language, differing in more respects from, than agreeing with, Bengalee, and I think we made a great mistake in directing that all business should be transacted in Bengalee, and that the Assamese must acquire it. It is too late now to retrace our steps, but I would strongly recommend Anundaram Phookun's proposition to the favourable consideration of the Council of Education... An English youth is not taught Latin until he is well grounded in English, and in the same manner an Assamese should not be taught a foreign language until he knows his own. (Para 92, pp. 27, 28).

AN IMPORTANT APPENDIX: Mills in Appendix J to his Report, inserts "Observation on the Administration of the Province of Assam by Baboo Anundaram Dhekial Phookun". We quote below two extracts from it on Education and court-language:—"We are constrained with regret to acknowledge that education in the country under the enlightened Government of England is in a retrograde state! During the prosperity of the native Government, the education of the respectable classes in Sanskrit knowledge always formed an object of the social care and attention of the State... Since the annexation of the province to the British Empire, Sanskrit education, owing to the want of encouragement, has gradually been abolished. A certain number of institutions styled Vernacular schools, has been established in the country. Instructions in these schools are imparted in a foreign language, viz. Bengalee, which is but imperfectly understood by the teachers themselves, not to speak of the pupils. The education which they afford is of the simplest and most elementary kind; the students seldom aspire to a higher knowledge than a mere acquaintance with simple reading and writing. The few books that are used in the branches of elementary learning are composed in a foreign tongue, which necessarily prevents their being of any popular use. Much time is, in the first instance wasted in acquiring a knowledge of Bengalee, and the reason assigned for the substitution of the Vernacular is that "Bengalee is the language adopted in the courts," as if the object were to make the Assamese a nation of Judicial officers. (xi. Education and Schools).

"Under the provisions of Act XXIX of 1837, the vernacular language of a District was directed to be used in the courts. We find, however, with regret, that notwithstanding the provisions of this wholesome law, a foreign language, viz. Bengalee, has been introduced into the courts of Assam. It is only to the officers and other persons connected with the courts that Bengalee is generally intelligible. The mass of the population and even private gentlemen possess no knowledge of the language.... For more than ten years after the annexa-

tion of the province, Assamese was the language of the courts. On what grounds Bengalee has been now allowed to supersede the Vernacular, we are at a loss to understand, Assamese being the vernacular language as well of the people as of the majority of the Judges and ministerial officers of the courts, no inconvenience can possibly arise from its use." (lix. Language of the Courts).

"A FEW REMARKS": In the following year, 1855, appeared from the Baptist Mission Press, Sibsagar, "A few Remarks on the Assamese Language" "by a Native", a work which is so often referred to by almost all subsequent writers on the subject. In his Report on the Progress of Historical Research in Assam, published from the Assam Secretariat Printing Office, Shillong, 1897, Sir E. A. Gait, I.C.S., observed:—"For some years after the annexation of Assam Valley the old schools or tols for the teaching of Sanskrit were maintained. Subsequently these tols were replaced by modern Vernacular schools, in which Bengalee, which had already been declared to be the language of the courts, was made the medium of instruction, the theory being that Assamese was only a dialect of Bengalee and had no literature of its own. This view was eagerly refuted by the natives of the country and in 1855 a well-written vindication of the claims of Assamese to rank as a separate language was published under the title "A Few Remarks on the Assamese Language" at the Baptist Mission Press, Sibsagar. The author is said to have been Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, a well known Assamese scholar... The writer goes on to controvert the idea that Assamese has no literature and shows that prior to the beginning of the present century the Assamese literature was more extensive than Bengalee."

"A GLIMPSE OF ASSAM" also writes about this and other works that preceded and followed it: "On this subject we need not add but refer any one specially interested, to a pamphlet by a Native entitled "A few remarks on the Assamese Language". In it the author gives a list of the ancient Assamese literature of 62 Hindu religious works and Purans, and over 40 dramatic works, having for their subject historical events founded in the celebrated poems, the Mahābhārat and the Rāmāyaṇa. The Assamese cannot be said to be destitute of literature. (Para XI).

"Many useful works have been issued by the American Baptist Mission Press since its establishment in 1837, prepared by the Missionaries. Rev. N. Brown translated the "New Testament" into Assamese, also "Pilgrim's Progress" and other useful books." (Para XII).

"To aid in the study of the Vernacular, a Bengalee and Assamese Dictionary was prepared by Jaduram Deka Baruah in 1839 for Col. Jenkins and presented to the Mission. Brown's "Grammatical Notes" was issued in 1848, also "Vocabulary and Phrase Book" by Miss Cutter. In 1864 a small Vocabulary in English and Assamese was compiled by Mr. Wood, the former work being out of print. In 1867, Dr. Broson compiled and issued an Assamese and English dictionary. Several useful works have been prepared by native gentlemen." (Para XIII).

"A monthly paper called "Arunodoi" or Dawn of Light began its career of usefulness in 1846, and for many years was the only paper



published in the province for several years. It was most carefully edited, profusely illustrated, treating in all subjects, both secular and religious, in a manner calculated to instruct and interest the people. The useful sheet came to an end in December, 1880." (Para XV).

As the fruit of all these earnest efforts, Assamese now secured official recognition as a language of Law Courts and as the proper medium of instruction in the schools in Sir George Campbell's time. Considering the importance of the subject we produce below the full text of the Resolution, General Department; Education; Calcutta, the 19th April (1873): "Read again—Letter No. 3045, dated 17th May, to the Commissioner of Assam, asking for a report on the language used in the courts of Assam, and inquiring why Assamese should not be substituted for Bengallee as the language of courts and schools in Assam. Reply from the Commissioner, forwarding a collection of opinions from district and sub-divisional officers of Assam, and from other gentlemen whom the Commissioner consulted.

"RESOLUTION": "The Lieutenant Governor observes that for many years there have been differences of opinion on the question whether the Assamese language ought to be recognised as the court and school language of Assam. Mr. Moffat Mills, after completing a tour through Assam, and questioning carefully all the Government officers and people all over the country, wrote in 1853: "The people complain, and in my opinion with much reason, of the substitution of Bengallee for the vernacular Assamese. Bengallee is the language of the courts, not of the popular books and Shasters, and there is a strong prejudice to its general use. It is because education is imparted to the youths in a foreign tongue that they look only to Government for employ. Assamese is described by Mr. Brown, the best scholar in the province, as a beautiful, simple language, differing in more respects from, than agreeing with, the Bengallee; and I think we made a great mistake in directing that all business should be transacted in Bengallee, and the that the Assamese must acquire it. It is too late now to retrace our steps, but I would strongly recommend Anundaram Phookun's proposition to the favourable consideration of Council of Education, viz. the substitution of the vernacular language in lieu of Bengallee, the publication of a series of popular works in the Assamese language, and the completion of the course of vernacular education in Bengallee." The highly educated native of Assam, quoted by Mr. Mills, stated in Appendix J to Mr. Mills's report that "for more than ten years after the annexation of the province, the Assamese was the language of the courts." And he argued that Assamese was no near akin to Bengallee than Ooriah was, and that the people of Assam had as much claim to use their own vernacular, as had the people of Orissa.

"2. Since Mr. Mills and Anudaram Phookun wrote in 1853, more or less agitation has gone on from time to time for the recognition of Assamese as the language of the courts: the missionary and the indigenous schools have continued to teach Assamese; one or more vernacular

newspapers, calling themselves Assamese, have sprung up. The late officiating Commissioner, Colonel Haughton formally recommended that Assamese should be made the language of the courts. Colonel Haughton's recommendation was not approved by the Government of Bengal; but meanwhile all civil officers serving in Assam were compelled to pass in Assamese, just as Bengal officers have to pass in Bengallee, or North-western province officers in Hindustanee. Recently memorials from different parts of Assam have been presented to the Lieutenant Governor upon the subject; and he has himself held in other parts of India that the vernacular of a people ought not to be elbowed out of a country in favour of another language which happens to be the vernacular of a neighbouring, more numerous and educated people. The tendency of the Government of India and of the legislation of late years has been to permit the vernacular of each province to be used in its courts. The facts and memorials of the last few years have shown that the Assamese language is still the vernacular of the people. Accordingly the Lieutenant Governor caused reports to be called for upon the subject in the following words:

"His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor has recently had before him more than one petition from Assam, praying that Assamese instead of Bengallee may be made the language of the Government schools and the Government courts in Assam. Your opinion on this point, the Lieutenant Governor gathers to be, that Bengallee and Assamese are so nearly akin that Bengallee may well be left as the language both of schools and courts." But it would appear from Colonel Haughton's letter of the 28th November and also from some of the correspondence quoted above, that Assamese is taught in the Missionary schools; that there are books and a Dictionary published of the Assamese language; and that there have been on and off, from time to time, expressions of feeling in different parts of Assam in favour of the adoption of Assamese as the language of the courts.

"The Lieutenant-Governor would now ask you to consider the matter fully with reference to the above considerations, and to send a copy of this letter to, and obtain from, each of the Deputy Commissioners of your divisions a report upon the languages used in their courts and regarding the propriety of substituting Assamese for Bengallee. The Lieutenant-Governor would particularly wish to know for each district what language the people speak when they come to court; what they speak at home in their own houses; and whether there do occur from time to time cases of practical difficulty or inconvenience from the use of Bengallee as the court language. His Honour would also inquire what language is taught in the few indigenous schools there may be, and in the mission schools all over the division, and whether any considerable proportion of the amlah of the Assam offices and courts are Assamese. He wishes not only to know whether the objections to the use of Bengallee are insuperable, but also what reason there is for using Bengallee among an Assamese people. *Prima facie* it would seem natural to use Assamese; and if we are to use Bengallee, it must not only be shown that the evils of that course are not intolerable, but also that there is strong reason for adopting an apparently surprising course."



"3. A report has now been received from the Commissioner, together with reports from all the Deputy Commissioners and some districts of Assam, and also reports from other officers whom the Commissioner consulted. Colonel Hopkinson is himself decidedly in favour of retaining Bengallee as the language of the courts and schools in Assam. He mentions that no reports are submitted from the hill districts, as neither Bengallee nor Assamese is spoken in those districts.

"4. The Lieutenant-Governor has given his full consideration to the views of the Assam officers, and he is much indebted to them for the careful way in which they have handled this important matter. The majority of the Deputy Commissioners and experienced Assistant Commissioners are, the Lieutenant-Governor finds, in favour of Assamese; and generally it may be observed that the Bengallees, and the officers who have been but a little time in the province, or do not understand its language, are against Assamese, while those who have had most practical experience are for it, excepting Mr. A. E. Campbell. This latter officer is employed in the lowest part of the lowest district of Assam, and seems to have been formerly the advocate of Bengallee, the arguments for which he well puts.

"No amount of argument about derivative affinity can get over the fact clearly testified to, and nowhere really contradicted, that the people of Assam do not understand Bengallee, and that the petitions written in their name and the court proceedings are unintelligible to them; while the recent agitation proves clearly that the majority of the Assamese much wish to have their own language for educational and court purposes.

"5. The only real difficulty in the way of recognising Assamese as the vernacular of the province is the paucity of higher school-books in the language and that difficulty is greatly mitigated by the fact, so much dwelt upon by those who favour Bengallee, that a really literate person who knows one of the two languages, can soon master the other. For teaching the higher classes of schools, therefore, when Assamese books cannot be got, we must use Bengallee school-books. Subject to this limitation, Assamese must now, the Lieutenant-Governor considers, be introduced into all the courts and schools of the valley districts of Assam. Bengallee words may be employed for technical term for which there is no Assamese equivalent, and for which English words cannot be conveniently introduced; but for the rest, Assamese must be used bonafide as the Court and school language of Assam. The recent orders of the High Court have, it is understood from Major Lamb's and Major Campbell's reports, virtually made the use of Assamese compulsory in petitions and such like documents.

"6. In all primary schools Assamese will be taught to the exclusion of Bengallee; also in all middle schools, and in lower middle classes of higher schools. When a class of twelve or more boys wish for it, Bengallee may be separately taught as a language. In the upper classes of higher schools every subject in which there is an Assamese book is to be taught in Assamese; subjects in which Assamese school books do not exist, can be taught either in Bengallee or in English. The Inspec-

tor of Schools, Assam Circle, will be at once instructed to make a careful and exact report upon the subject of Assam"—By order of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, C. Bernard. Offg. Secretary to the Government of Bengal.

"No. 1537. Copy of the foregoing resolution, together with the Commissioner's letter, the reports of the district and subdivisional officers, and of the Inspector of Schools, and the printed extracts from Mr. Moffat Mills's Report and Mr. Dutt's memorandum, forwarded to the Commissioner of Assam, with the request that he will take very early steps for giving effect to the orders of the Government both in the courts and schools of the five valley districts of Assam; and with the intimation that the unprinted residue of the enclosures to his letter have been bound and will be kept among the records of the Government. By order of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, H. J. S. Cotton, Offg. Asst. Secretary to the Government of Bengal, Calcutta the 9th April, 1873.

High Court Circular: Order No. 8, dated 6th March, 1872, demanding use of Assamese in Judicial Courts of Assam parallel to the order of the Lieutenant Governor. Notification: Judicial Department. Judicial. Calcutta, the 25th July, 1873. "Under the provisions of Act XXIX of 1837, and Section 337 of the Criminal Procedure Code, it is hereby notified that Assamese is the language to be used in Judicial and Revenue Proceedings in, and is the ordinary language of the five valley districts of Assam, viz. Kāmroop, Durrung, Nowgong, Sebsaugor, and Luckimpore. By order of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, A. Mackenzie Junior Secretary to the Government of Bengal."

**SHAMEFUL PERSISTENCE:** Unfortunately the mischiefs did not stop here as it should have been. Since the Commissioner himself was against Assamese, he had some Deputy Commissioners and the Director of Public Instruction, besides other subordinate officers, to support him and to do the needful to prevent inclusion of Assamese still. The following letter speaks eloquently how reactionaries started by putting stumbling blocks on the line of action laid down by the Lieutenant-Governor's order declaring prizes for Assamese primers.

"No. 2152. From the Officiating Secretary to the Government of Bengal in the General Department, to the Director of Public Instruction, Darjeeling, the 18th June, 1873, General Department, Education: "Sir, with reference, to your letter No. 72T, dated 10th June and enclosures, the Lieutenant-Governor desires me to state that he would not interfere with the orders of the Commissioner of Assam as to the rejection of the primer which you enclose. It appears that the author is Assamese; but the Committee who passed the book consist of two Kāmrup officers and a native, who, from his name, would seem to be a Bengallee. The primer itself does not seem to be well got up as to type.

"2. The Lieutenant-Governor would suggest, for the consideration of the Commissioner of Assam, that he should offer a reward of Rs. 500

for the best, and Rs. 100 for the second best, set of Assamese primers, to consist of not more than three and not less than two books of twenty duodecimo pages each, the copy right of and property in the prize-books to belong to Government. If Colonel Hopkinson thought right, competitors might be called upon to send in their manuscripts to the Deputy Commissioner of one of the upper or middle Assam districts, not later than the October; and the manuscripts might be submitted to a committee consisting of one civil officer, one educational officer, at least one educated Assamese, and perhaps one of the Missionaries who have studied the Assamese language and have been engaged on education in upper or middle Assam. On receiving the Committee's report the Commissioner might award the prizes, select the primers he would adopt for use in Assamese primary schools, and offer an honorarium of Rs. 100 to each of the non-official members of the committee who may be good enough to take trouble in the matter.

"3. Perhaps it would be best to send the manuscripts down to the Alipore Jail Press, or to the Secretariat or Baptist Mission Press, to be printed. The final proof would be sent up or for correction to such officers in Assam as the Commissioner might appoint. When the proofs were finally corrected, the matter could be stereotyped at the Alipore Jail Press, and could then be struck off at a very small outlay for each 10,000 copies that might be wanted. You would be able to arrange with the Deputy Inspector of Schools, Calcutta, for seeing the primers through the press. If each primer could be sold in Assam for half an anna, perhaps its price would be within the means of the poorest.

"4. The Accountant-General will be directed to pass against the grant of the encouragement of vernacular publications any outlay that the Commissioner of Assam may see fit to incur within the limit of the suggestions now conveyed. I have the honour to be, Sir, your most obedient servant, C. Bernard, Offg. Secretary to the Government of Bengal."

That the reactionaries did not feel chastised by this mild rebuke contained in the Lieutenant Governor's letter quoted above, but went still deeper into mischiefs, will be seen from the following letter which shows the folly of the whole game:—"No. C/268. From Major W. S. Clarke, Deputy Commissioner, Lukhimpore, to the Personal Assistant to the Commissioner of Assam, Debrooghurh, the 30th October, 1873. Sir, I have the honour to submit the report of the Committee appointed under the orders quoted marginally for the selection of "Primers" for use in the schools of Assam. Commissioner's letter No. D/535-T dated 5th July, 1873, to the D. C., Lukhimpore, Memo. on the Assamese Primers selected by the Committee appointed with reference to Government Order No. 2152 of 18th June, 1873.

"Books were sent in by 58 competitors in all, 35 before 1st October, and 28 after that date. The Committee have selected 10 sets of books in all—(a) 7 received in time, and (b) 3 after date, and consider the books written by Hemchandra Sarma and (his brother) Tulsiram as the best and the 2nd best, and those sent in by Revd. Clarke as the 3rd best; and recommend Mrs. Ward's books for consideration. (a) Hemchandra, Tulsiram (Hemchandra's brother), Rev. E. W. Clarke, Mrs.

Ward, Lukhinath, Trilochun, Dehiram, (b) Gangagovind, Radhanath, Roodram.

"I have gone through all the 10 sets of books and am quite disappointed to find that none of them is free from the defect for which the book received with Mr. Martin's letter No. 150 dated May 10th, 1873, had been rejected, viz. a large proportion of Bengali words. (Or, the First Primer for Assamese youths by Kaliram). The proportion of Bengali words is smallest in Babu Hem Chandra's Primer which is decidedly the best of all books sent in; but the accompanying extract (p. 19) taken at random from the first part of his book will show that out of 67 words there are more than 40 pure Bengali, and the book contains among others, the following Bengalee phrases and sentences. ... "Parhibar samayat anya kathat man nidiba". "Pandite sakalo thaite marjyada pai." "Ahar aru Saon ei dumah barsha" ... "Tomar hāt mukh aru kapor sadai nikakai rakhiba." The bold typed words are marked as words used in East Bengal.

"Next to Hemchandra comes his brother Tulsiram—whose book not only contains a much larger proportion of Bengali words, but is defective in other respects too... Pure Bengali (!!) sentences like the following abound... Dhan hale krame sakalo hay... Namra lokak sakaloe mane. A. Dewatar nirmali murt laba lage... B. Sanskrit sakalo bha-shatkai bhal... The instruction contained in the sentence marked A is such as we should not teach in schools supported by Government, and I wonder how the committee recommended a book containing such lessons; and to say that "Sanskrit is the best of all languages", as the author says in the sentence marked B, is, I think, far from correct and we should not, I imagine, teach what is so palpably incorrect....

"11. I must note that the Advocates of Assamese will say that many of the words which I have marked as Bengali, are Sanskrit, and it is my conviction that no Assamese book can be written with a smaller proportion of Bengali words than Hemchandra has written (the author of the farce "Kaniar Kirton"). 12. It is also not easy to understand that when there has been so much difficulty in writing a primer, how are they going to write books for higher classes. 13. In fact, it is simply impossible to exclude Bengali words from so-called Assamese books and documents."

The following letter will show how the Commissioner himself applied all the weight of his authority in a vindictive manner only to gain his point. It is indeed so pity, the more so when we know their knowledge of Assamese was so shallow, rather nothing or less than nothing: "No. 312. From Colonel Henry Hopkinson, Agent Governor-General, N. E. Frontier and Commissioner of Assam, to the Director of Public Instruction, Calcutta, Dated Gowhatty, 11th December, 1873.

"2. You will see that the instruction given in the 2nd paragraph of the Government letter to you have been faithfully and exactly carried out; but in my opinion neither the labours of the committee nor of the competitors have been successful and I could not recommend for the adoption of Education Department any one of the sets of primers that have been tendered, nor could I conscientiously award either of

the prizes to any. Far from the report made of them, I can come to no other conclusion that they are one and all Bengali primers more or less thinly disguised by an admixture of local archaic or otherwise corrupted and debased words... (!!)

"3. You will see by the contributions of the Seeksagar Missionaries to whom we are chiefly indebted for the agitation in favor of the creation of an Assamese language (!) that in their attempts to write pure Assamese with very rare exceptions they are writing nothing but "Bengali"... Lastly, you will see that where so-called Assamese has been introduced, not only have we no guarantee or proof that they are words in currency throughout the province, and not words known only to the compilers of the primers or in particular localities where they have lived, but Mr. Martin quotes instances raising grave presumption to the contrary as when an Assamese clerk in his office could not understand the only sentence admitted not to be in Bengali out of a number of sentences in Tulsiram's primer which would be understood by any intelligent Bengali peasant...

"4. I will not trespass on your time and patience by an attempt to go into all grounds on which I have become convinced that this seeking after an "Assamese language" either in the education or any other department is the pursuit of an illusion, but I join with Dr. Martin in thinking that it will be a priceless boon to the cause of education in Assam if you could prevail upon the Government to re-instate Bengali as the proper medium of instruction for our Assam schools (!)

P.S. I shall be grateful if you will bring this correspondence as early as possible under the notice of His Honor in order that it may be considered with the reference on the subject of the language which I have recently made to Government in the General Department, Education Branch."

This last letter from the learned Commissioner to the Director of Public Instruction, Calcutta, with the opinions of three "best Bengali scholars", of course unknown, will clearly show the clique against Assamese and the depth to which they could descend. "Commissioner's Office, Assam Division. The 6th-1-1874. Opinions of Gopal Ch. Banerjee, Headmaster, Calcutta Normal School, and 2 other best Bengali scholars obtained through Mr. Clarke 1/S. To the Director of Public Instruction... 2. Sir, I am satisfied that the further the enquiry is prosecuted the plainer will it appear that the hypothesis of the, at present Assamese language, being a distinct one from Bengali, is a monstrous delusion. (!). I have, etc., Commissioner."

To sum up, the menace of Bengali continued almost all through the nineteenth century, nay, even till now in some respects, for which "the provincial patriotism and national conceit of the Bengalees living in Assam" must be first responsible, and then the British Government. This had far-reaching effects, and though by the honest efforts of Sir George Campbell necessary steps had been taken to redress the wrong, it has been far from sufficient and the evils of the wrong course have

not been totally uprooted. It has not only created a lasting inferiority complex in Benglo-phobia which has been so harmful, but it has also to some extent affected the genius of the language in adulterating the native prose style and poetic diction to a certain extent.

Besides the publications already referred to, there were sufficient contributions from other quarters having direct or indirect relation with Assamese or throwing some light on it. Such are the *Notices of the Languages, Literature and Religions of the Bauddhas of Nepal and Bhot* by B. H. Hodgson, printed at Singapore in 1828 (*Asiatic Researches*, Vol. XVI, p. 400); *Remarks on the Indo-Chinese Alphabets* by Dr. Bastian, printed at Singapore in 1834 (*Journal of the Asiatic Society, Bengal*, Vol. III, Appendix II); *Comparison of Indo-Chinese Languages with comparative Vocabularies of Bengali, Assamese, Khamti, Siamese, Aka, Abor, Mishmi, Burmese etc.*, by Rev. Nathan Brown, printed in Calcutta in 1837 (*Journal of the Asiatic Society, Bengal*, Vol. VI, p. 102); *Grammar of the Assamese Language* by William Robinson printed at Serampur in 1839; *Essays relating to the Language of East Africa, Asia and Australia* by J. R. Logan (1487-1859); *On the Languages spoken by the various tribes inhabiting the valley of Assam and its mountain confines* by W. Robinson (1849); *Vocabulary in English and Assamese* by Mrs. S. R. Ward (1854); *Specimens of the Languages of India* by Sir George Campbell (1877); *Phrases in English and Assamese* by Mrs. H. B. L. Cutter (1876); *On the Languages of the Indo-Chinese Peninsula of the Indian Archipelago*, by Dr. R. N. Cust (1877).

**CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTION.** The literature of Assamese for some quarter century since 1836 may be aptly styled as 'Christian-Assamese'. What this epithet exactly means needs a little elucidation. There is no denying the fact that these Baptist Missionaries worked with all earnestness and regard they could command; but in spite of their best endeavours these visitors from the New World must have naturally failed at least in certain things to have grasped the genius of Assamese, while on the other hand, there were certain elements in their writing of Assamese that smelled foreign to it. The following sentences, from *Jātrikar Jātrā*, rendered from Bunyan's famous work *Pilgrim's Progress*, and appearing in *Orunodai* (1846-80) may suggest an idea:—"Ene awasthā halat sei mānuh gharalai gai āpon larā-tirotāi nubijibalai jimānalaike pārichil āponār petat dukh daman kai rākhi thaichil, kintu asantoṣ bārhi galat sarah kāl rākhiba noārile; ei hetuke krame tirotā aru larār āgat pet bhāngi ei rūpe kabalai dharile bole mor petar latratihāt, tomālokar ati bethār mitir ji mai, savanās haicō". This style is surely not all natural and not all idiomatic Assamese, and there is certainly something definitely foreign about it.



But this Missionary contribution to Assamese was not without intrinsic merit. The defects of unnatural and unidiomatic expressions which characterized some of their writings had been temporary, but the merits of their writing live so long after them. The first of such merits seem even to be accompanied with their very defect. It is what may be called "broken Assamese" which they wrote; and this has a charm of its own that only compares with the broken words spoken by a child of any native speech.

An extract from the news column of *Orunodai*, Vol. I, No. 6; June, 1846):—"Kākati Faringar kathā. Ingrāji 1844 sanar 27 Januari tārikhat Sanibāre āṇḍāj beli epar derpar uthār samayat bhāti fālar parā kākati faringbor āhi mokām Sivasāgar pāi ujāi gaichile. Kintu sei faringbor jipone jāi, pakā maut kaio adhik ghane jāi; ākās dekhibalai nopoākai meghar nichinā dhāki jāi aru batāhar sadris bhon bhon kai joā sabad sunibalai pāi, āru atisay okhokai uriba pāre: āru sei faringbilak etāire eke baran, epherio larcār nāi. Tār pākhīr dui dātīt kalamere likhār nicinā kālā āk āce, sei nimitte mānuhe kākati faring buli kai." This catches the ear of any one familiar with Assamese as something new, simple and charming.

The second point in regard to the merits of Christian-Assamese is their enriching the Assamese vocabulary by brightening and bringing into use a large number of Assamese words fast becoming obsolete and lost, and by coining others into elegant Assamese while in the early period of Assamese we find a large number of indigenous words and forms in use even in the Buddhist songs, Caryas and Dohās, there seems to have been an attempt at more Sanskritising the language in the Vaishnavite period. Another attempt at more Sanskritising the language seems to have begun in the modern period with Hemcandra Baruwā, the lexicographer. But the Baptist Missionaries made a sincere attempt at making the spoken and written speech perfectly agree. Hence they often used the more colloquial forms of speech and always preferred the use of indigenous words, generally so simple and sweet. Their special credit lies in the fine coining of words so large in number. One simple instance may be given in the word 'latā-panial' which they preferred to the word 'āngur' for the English word 'grapes', as 'panial' is an Assamese fruit-plant but is not a creeper.

It is often complained that Baptist Missionaries corrupted the Assamese orthography system. But those who know must admit that it is not the Baptist Missionaries who first invented this system. It is of course true that by their temperament, the Americans seem inclined to simplification as they have done in the case of English; but in regard

to Assamese it is somebody else who was first responsible for this, and the Baptist Missionaries only supported it, since they found that Assamese mass rather followed this pronunciation exactly more than they did the Sanskrit. The following extract from Dr. Miles Bronson's dictionary may finally clear this point:—"The system of orthography adopted in this work is that of Jaduram Borua, a learned Assamese Pandit, which it is believed much better corresponds with the actual pronunciation of the people than any other system met with. (See "Introduction to Brown's Grammatical Notice", p. IX). Nowgong, August 12th, 1867, M. Bronson". A similar explanation, it is remembered, was given in the *Orunodai* by its learned editor on the point.

The last but not the least contribution of these Christians is their opening the door of Assamese literature to the West. Though the chronicles on secular subject were written even side by side with the Vaisnavite works from about the sixteenth century, and though there were a few scattered works on arithmetic, astronomy or astrology, medicine and science, still the whole atmosphere of Assamese literature was certainly fully charged with almost mediaeval ideas, religion or theosophy. Even such secular subjects as history, written right about the middle of the nineteenth century in the British period, was written in verse and with a view to prove the transitoriness of the world and worldly powers. By communicating the ideas and facts of the different parts of the world, these missionaries were a great deal successful in freeing the minds of the people from the mediaeval ideas into the free air of modernism.

This transition from the old world of dreams to the new world of reality, this freeing of the spirit from the bondage of mediaeval thoughts and this rebirth and pure joy in the dawn of new world order, may perhaps be termed a new renaissance; and the Assamese people were awakened to it with the golden vistas opened before them, undoubtedly by this Missionary literature, or by the *Orunodai* (lit. Sun-rise). After the long, long night of miseries, of cliques and intrigues, of rebellions and invasions, of physical and mental bondage, it was indeed a happy dawn with new life that the people were wedded to.

The so-called Christian, Assamese also shaped the Assamese vocabulary to suit new ideas and expressions and to meet the new demands. They have already shaped modern Assamese for dignified prose by rendering the Bible into Assamese, keeping the scriptural dignity of style intact. They now coined necessary words for writing history of different countries and nations of the world, and for giving news and views of various scientific discoveries. Thus they not only liberated



the spirit of the Assamese from the bondage of the old-world ideas in the domain of thought, but they also removed the confines of the language and made it quite suitable for modern use.

Mention of the part the Baptist Missionaries played in removing the usurpation of Bengali from Assamese schools and courts may be concluded by quoting an extract from a letter given as Appendix E. in *Mills's Report on the Province of Assam*: "We might as well think of creating a love of knowledge in the mind of a stupid English boy by attempting to teach him French before he knew anything of the rudiments of English. To my own mind, this feature of the educational policy pursued in Assam is not only absurd, but destructive of the highest motives of education and must necessarily cripple the advancement of the schools, as well as separate them from the sympathies of the people." Appendix E. A letter from A. H. Danforth, Missionary, Gowhatty, 10th July, 1853.

#### IV. DEVELOPMENT OF A NON-CHRISTIAN PROSE

Political and educational circumstances were responsible for the rather very slow appearance of Assamese native writers in the field of literature. It is because English rule was a new thing in Assam now and the people were not acclimatised to it. The English school-master too was not yet abroad, and the people had to meet the English officer through the Bengali subordinates who were ignorant of Assamese. And, thirdly, it took time for the people to yet quite overcome shocks of the late brutal Burmese invasions and the after-effects of the earlier rebellions of the Māyāmarās, and then to adapt themselves to the new environment. Never-the-less it was not too late when they appeared.

JADURAM BARUWA (1802-69) was born at Jorhat on the 23rd Caitra of 1723 Śak or about the first week of April, 1802. His father Kṛṣṇadās Bharālī Baruwā was a great favourite with Candra Kānta Siṃha, the last great Ahom king. Kṛṣṇadās had four sons of whom Jādurām was the second, the first being known as Viṣṇudās Dergayā Baruwā. Jādurām was nicknamed Lereli Dekā Baruwā, because he was physically so weak and feeble in his early days. His two sons were Kṛṣṇarām, who was well-known at Jorhat as one well-versed in astrology and medicine, and Durgāprasād who became a Tahsildar at Sibsāgar.

Jādurām appears to have had better education in early life than it could be expected in his days, and he became a Munsiff at Jorhat while Brodey was the Deputy Commissioner of the Sibsāgar district and Indunārāyaṇ Saru-Meliā Rājā was the Sadar Amin of the Jorhat subdivi-

sion. In the days of the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857, Jādurām was in charge of the North Lakhimpur subdivision. He was at Gauhati before he became Sadar Amin of the Barpetā subdivision on the 15th June, 1860, relieving Gargarām Baruwā. Under orders of the Lieutenant Governor, he was thence transferred to the Dibrugarh subdivision on the 3rd November, 1860. He died at Sibsagar on Friday, the 23rd Aswin, 1791 Śak, the second week of October, 1869.

Jādurām's Assamese-Bengali Dictionary was presented to Colonel Jenkins who made it over to the Baptist Missionaries in 1839. He was regarded as the authority of the system of Assamese orthography used by the Missionaries in the *Orunodai* (1846-80) and in the Bronson's Dictionary (August, 1867). Earlier in the translation of the Bible by the Serampore Missionaries and elsewhere, the present system of orthography was in vogue and was later restored by Hemcandra Baruwā not long after. Jādurām was undoubtedly a great personality of his time.

HALIRAM DHEKIAL PHUKAN (1802?-80) was born in 1724 Śak to the first wife of Paraśurām Baruwā who was the officer of the Ahom king that sent men to arrest Badan Candra Bar Phukan under royal orders issued by Pūrṇānanda Burhā Gohāi. Soon after this Paraśurām died on the fourth day of bright moon in the month of Baisākha in 1738 Śak (1816 A.D.). His son Halirām was then bestowed on the title of Duariā and was given the office of Dhekiāl Phukan by king Candrakāta Simha who was then at Gauhati. Halirām was recognised in this capacity by Major Scott when the East India Company took the charge of the country. Halirām made the first settlement of Nowgong and Darrang, and held his office in the Senior (Lower) Assam when it was divided by the Company into two Divisions, after 1838, the Junior being the Upper Assam Division. He now became the Collectory Sheristadar and made the settlement of the Kāmṛūp district.

Halirām was also a scholar in Sanskrit and Tantrik lore. About 1829, he issued from the Calcutta Samācār Candrikā Press, a history of Assam in Bengali, and in 1831, from the same press published another work *Kāmākhyā Jātrā Paddhati* in Sanskrit. Halirām was not only well-read but also a vastly travelled man, and his second work was certainly written with a view to help the pilgrims of different parts of India in visiting the Kāmākhyā temple. In the former work he was really the precursor of Guṇābhirām, Gait, and others. Major Scott died at Cherapunji and Mr. Cre crust became the Commissioner of Assam; it is the latter who created the post of an Assistant Magistrate at Gauhati and Halirām was appointed to it at Rs. 230 per month.

MANIRAM DEWAN BARBAHNDAR BARUWA (1806-58) was born at Cāring in the old east-Rangpur (Sibsāgar) town to Rāmdatta Dolā-Kāṣariā Baruwā. During the first horrible Burmese invasion, this family fled to Cilmāri and at last returned to Jorhat with king Purandar Siṃha. Even during these troublous times, Maṇirām acquired sufficient knowledge of Persian and was the brave lad of eighteen summers who led the army under Captain Harsebara from Gauhati to Kaliabar, Nowgong, when David Scott and Davidson pursued the Burmese to upper Assam. After occupying the Burmese fort at Rungpur (Sibsagar), Baddingsfield took Maṇirām as his guide to conquer the hill tribes by persuasion. It is in this excursion that tea leaves were first discovered in Assam, when one leader of Siṃphos presented Davidson with tea leaves which they used to call 'phīnāp'. Returning from this excursion by subduing the tribes of Siṃphos, Khāsis and others, Maṇirām became a favourite with the English officers as a very intelligent young man.

Maṇirām was soon made a Collectory Mirmunchi and Peshkāṛ. The court of Rungpur then used to sit about the Jaysagar tank and two parliamentary houses, senior and junior, known as Bar-Panchayat and Saru-Panchayat of old, used to help Captain Neufville in his judicial decisions. Maṇirām used to wield immense influence even as the Collectory Peṣker and was called the Kalitā Rajā. Maṇirām's great statesmanship is revealed in the nice Reports he submitted, the first to Jenkins when he came with a Maṇipuri king in 1832 to enquire into the economic condition of Assam; and the second, on the 23rd Baisakh, 1775 Śak (1853 A.D.) to Moffat Mills both on his behalf and in behalf of Prince Ghanakānta Siṃha. Maṇirām became the prime minister to king Purandar Siṃha on the first Baisākh, 1755 Śak (1833 A.D.) and secured the title of Barbhāṇḍār Baruwā. He became the Dewān of the Assam Company and the Sheristadar of the East India Company. On an allegation of treason, Maṇirām was executed and hanged at Jorhat on the 16th Fālgun, 1779 Śak (corresponding to February 26, 1858). A history of Assam, styled as *Buranjī Vivek Ratna*, was compiled in 1838 by this busy politician.

KASINATH TAMULI PHUKAN (?1810-?80) was the eldest of the four sons of Śrinath and was the grandson of Śivanāth, belonging to the family of Kākatīār of Sibsagar. Kāśināth, was one of the officers of king Purandar Siṃha's court when the latter began his rule after 1832 under the East India Company, and was thus a colleague of Maṇirām Dewān. He collaborated a history of Assam since published by the American Baptist Mission Press in 1844, with Rādhānāth Barbaruwā who was a scholar in Ahom and Persian languages. Kāśināth became

a Munsiff and Rādhānāth a Sadar Amin in the British administration. This history of Assam is the first of its kind printed in Assamese, compiled from old chronicles.

HARAKANTA BARUWA (?1813-1903) was born at North Gauhati, and was a Sadar Amin under British administration. He compiled another history of Assam sometime about 1870-88, since printed. In his preface he thus refers to Kāśināth and Rādhānāth's history: "Śrī Śrī Purandar Siṃha Mahārāj Company Bahadur āmole Brahmaputra nadar dakṣiṇe Dhansiri Nadir uttare Viśwanāth Dewālayar ujān Kachujānake simā kari ujani khaṇḍa sadiyā parjyanta 50,000/- pañcās hāzār takāt lālbandi kari 1755 Śakat prāpta howāt sei rajatti karā samayat Rajādevar ājnāre Rādhānāth Barbaruwā āru Kāśināth Śarma Tāmuli Phukane nānā sthānār parā isakal ekatrapurvāk sār sangrah kari ek-khāni grantha chumbak mate karile. Kintu sei granthakhanit anek āvasyakiya kathā likhibar nitānta āvasyak āchhil. Bodh karō bāhulya haba, sei nimitta likhā nahal." This shows that he added many things to the history compiled by Kāśināth and Rādhānāth.

## V. THE TRINITY OF PIONEERS IN MODERN PROSE

ANANDARAM DHEKIAL PHUKAN (1829-59) was born at Gauhati on Tuesday, the 7th Aswin, 1751 Śak corresponding to about 24th September, 1829, to Prasūti Devī and Halirām Dhekial Phukan. He began his studies in the fifth year and soon read such Sanskrit works as Ratnamālā and Mugdhabodh and also learnt the vernacular. In 1837 he was admitted into the Government High School at Gauhati, which was established two years earlier. He made good progress in English, and at the encouragement of Messrs Methi and Jenkins, Ānandarām with another friend of his, left for Calcutta in the rains of 1841. There was neither railway nor steamers in those days, and they reached their destination after 25 days by boats, via Sirajganj, Dacca and Sundarban. He then got himself admitted in the third standard of the junior branch of the Hindu College, but early in 1842 his companion died. In 1844 Ānandarām was promoted to the third standard of the senior branch of the Hindu College; but in November of the same year, he returned home. He died on the 18th June, 1859, when only 29 years 9 months and 29 days old.

Ānandarām began his early literary exercises in Assamese in the pages of the *Orunodai* in the forties of the nineteenth century. Then he compiled a series of useful Assamese Readers from various English works and printed two volumes as *Asamiyā Larār Mitra* in 1849. Messrs Methi and Jenkins, his earlier friends and guides, helped Ānandarām

a good deal in regard to compilation and publication of this series; but for paucity of funds no more volumes of this series could be published.

Anandarām acquired sufficient knowledge of Persian, read Gulistān, and Rawaistān, and committed the poems of Pandenāmā to memory. Anandarām's learned monograph was submitted to Moffat Mills in 1853 and was included in the latter's *Report on the Province of Asam* as Appendix J. It covered a much larger number of subjects than one could imagine. Even the paragraphs XXX to LX cover such topics of Assam as Revenue System, Rates of Assessment, Agriculture, Manufacture, Education and Schools, Public Works, Religious and Charitable Endowments, Opium cultivation, Population, Mortality, Medical Science and Medical schools, the Judicial System, the Police and Mofussil courts, the Rural Police, Law of Procedure, Law of Evidence, Oath, Execution of Decrees, redress in the Criminal Courts, Administration of Hindoo Law and Legal Opinions, Judges and Vakeels, Language of the Courts, Registry of Deeds, Registration of Marriage, etc. This shows the vast range of his knowledge of the various topics of his country at the early age of 24 years.

Anandarām's anonymous learned work "*A few Remarks on the Assamese Language*" by "A Native" issued in 1855, also quoted the very encouraging observations by foreign writers such as Mrs. S. R. Ward. In it Anandarām displays vast knowledge of the contents of Assamese literature though it was long before they were issued by the press. His account was far from a mere bird's-eye-view and he gives a list or analysis of as many as 62 religious poetical books and 40 dramatic works which called for no mean knowledge of the literature. His clear exposition of his subject in English also revealed sufficient command of the language.

Anandarām soon found that his paternal property was on the decrease and he must have found a job for the maintenance of his family. So with the help of his friends he managed to secure the appointment of a Jāmmādā of the Khata Pargana on the 29th April, 1847, under the orders of Mr. Agnew, the Collector of the Kāmrup district. On the 16th November of the same year, he was appointed a Munsiff for three months and was posted under Mr. Methi to be the Dewan of the Bijni State at Rs. 250 per mensem. Thence he went to Calcutta and in 1852 purchased a printing press in the name of his junior relation Guṇābhīram Baruwā for issuing Assamese books and named it the Calcutta New Press. On the 27th October of the same year he was appointed the Sub-Assistant Commissioner of Bārpeta and he left his job of the Bijni State to join this new post by the

advice of Colonel Jenkins. In April, 1854, Ānandarām was vested with powers of Junior Assistant to the Commissioner.

**PHUKAN'S CONTRIBUTION:** It is needless to indulge in the many would-have-beens of Ānandarām's life which was so sadly cut off before he attained his manhood; but mention must be made of a few of the many works which he has left half-done. The most important of such works are his English to Assamese and Assamese to English Dictionaries, which were advertised and a few pages printed as model in the *Orunodai* (pp. 180-82, Vol. XI, No. 12, December, 1856), edited by A. H. Danforth with necessary editorial comments on it. "Kintu ei duyo lokar upakār habar nimittee Srijut Ānandarām Dekiāl Phukane Ingrāji-Asamiyā āru Asamiyā-Ingrāji ei rūpe dui khaṇḍa abhidhān likhiche. Ei abhidhānār ākhar jōtōā āmātkai kichu beleg haiche hai" etc., saying that the orthography was modernised.

To quote one first word only is to show how perfect and scholarly Ānandarām's lexicon had been, and how, long before Hemcandra Baruwa, he attempted at a reformation of the spellings used by the Missionaries:—"Abacus, S.—khelar nāibā anka bā śakar dhal ankā falir nichinā pāt: itār bā śilar khūtār mūr"...Asamiyā bhāṣā janā pandit-sakale sabdabilākar artha āru jidare ākhar jotoā gaiche tāk cāi ji doṣ-guṇ dekhe tāk anugrahkai likhiba. A. Phu."

That the suggestion of Ānandarām in regard to changing the system of orthography used by the Missionaries provoked their thoughts about it, appears from the following editorial remarks in *Orunodai*, Vol. XIII. No. 1 (January, 1858): "Āgar dare likhā nohoā ene kicu kicu kathao capā thāke: arthāt purve Śrī jukta Brown sāhābe likhār dare krame āmār likhā capā haichil; kintu anek panditbilāke sei rupe ākhar likhāt bhāl nepāi. Sibilāke bhābicile bole missionary bilake Asamiyā ākhar sudhkai likhiba nejāne"...This thinking process of course found its consummation in Hemcandra Baruwā's overhauling of the entire system of orthography to the present one.

Bronson's Dictionary might be prompted also by this attempt of Ānandarām which remained apparently unfruitful. It may be said in this connection that the science of lexocography was no gift of the English language, and that like the Amarkoṣ in Sanskrit, Assamese lexicography was studied long before the introduction of the English language into Assam. Like the Buranjīs or Chronicles, the Assamese language seems indebted to the Ahoms for lexicons. Bar-Amra and Mati-Amra are the first attempts at writing dictionaries from and to Assamese to and from the Tai or Ahom language, at an early stage of Ahom rule for the common convenience of the rulers and the ruled.

A later Assamese dictionary was compiled in 1890 by one Rucināth Kāmarūpi, now preserved in the India office Library, London.

Essay, as a type of literature, began as a gift of English education. Assamese literature, which besides the prose speeches of the Vaiṣṇavite drama, the whole renderings of the Bhāgawat and the Gīta or the writing of whole chronicles, little knew about such fragmentary, yet complete within its domain of thought, composition before *Orunodoi* came into existence.

**EVALUATION OF MODERN PROSE:** The Vaiṣṇavite prose however perfect in itself was not tried for secular subjects, as the Buranjī or Chronicle prose was not tried for different modern scientific subjects; while Christian prose which dealt with the modern subjects was defective in the sense that it made palpable mistakes in idioms etc. and was therefore sometimes a bit too unnatural. The Vaiṣṇavite prose reached a distinct stage of development in the Kathā-Gītā and the Kathā Bhāgawat of Vaikunṭhanāth in sixteenth century, and the chronicle prose also reached a similar stage about one century later. While the former thrived in the shelter of the Satras, the religious institutions of Vaiṣṇavite culture, the latter prospered under the patronage of the courts of Ahom kings almost in parallel lines. The two prose styles differ in their manner as they do in their matter. The subject of the former is essentially religious as that of the latter is secular. The language of the one is rather artificial, abounding with a large majority of *tatsama* (Sanskrit) words, and harsh consonantal sounds; and that of the other is rather colloquial, having a large majority of *tadbhava* and indigenous words with soft sounds. The rather sonorous style of Vaiṣṇavite prose can of course be justified by its treatment of subjects of highly spiritual plane, demanding a scriptural dignity and grand majesty, as contrasted with the mundane subjects of history-prose. *Tadbhava* are words derived from *Tatsama* or Sanskrit.

Christian-prose is really a nickname in as much as it had nothing 'foreign' in it save some common errors in Assamese idioms committed by these foreign writers who could not be expected to have so thoroughly been conversant with the language in such a short space of time. While in matter this prose is both religious, like the Vaiṣṇavite prose, and secular, like the history prose, in manner it follows rather the latter with a large majority of *tadbhava* and indigenous words of soft sounds. The greatest gift contributed to Assamese literature by this prose was that its immediate predecessor, history-prose, was mundane, but not modern. Assamese literature till now was pent within the four walls of limited scope, and it is this prose that broke the walls open to permit pure



air and fresh light to enter in it. Thus we find almost the very process of evolution of Assamese prose from the Vaiṣṇavite to the history, from the history to the Christian, and finally from the Christian to modern prose. The synthesis of all this is national literature in Assamese. The modern prose has not that bombastic artificial style loaded with high-sounding Sanskrit words, but is as simple and natural as the history-prose or the so-called Christian prose, treating with all sorts of religious and secular subjects and without any detriment to efficiency.

Thus in modern prose all these forces meet leaving their defects behind, and one may call Anandarām the personification of this unity, and one knows no earlier native writer of this period who could command such a force. The best example of Anandarām's essay, style and patriotism embodied in his article *Inglandar Vivaran*, was published in the *Orunodoi*. It has something about it which surpasses all the defects of its immediate predecessors. We quote a passage, "He Kṛpāmay Jagadīśvar, ei Asam desor loksakalak svades sabhya giāni āru dhārmik karibalai mati diā, sibilākar abhāw āru durawasthā jānibalai sibilākak giān diā, āru tomāk jānibar āru ājnā pālibar jogya karā." 'O God the Gracious, lend such mind to the people of Assam, by which they can make their country more civilized, learned and virtuous: give them knowledge so that they may know their necessities and miseries: and by your wonderful power make them cultured and make them know you and make them fit to carry out your wishes.'

Again: "Jisamayāt Asam hābi guci ful bāri haba; nait dongā guci jāhāj haba, ghar bāhar guci sil itār haba, gāoe gāoe hāzāre hāzāre parhāsāli, giānar sabhā, cikitasālay, dukhiā daridrār paritrānar ālay haba, āru jikālat loksakale paraspar himsā nakari ātāie ātāik bhrātrivat ceneh kariba, konowe dutakā kānir salani michā sākhi nidiba, lākh-takāko kāti kari thaba; koti takā bheti pāio kāro anyāi nakaribā, besyā kani āru surā ei kathā desat loka bhu nopā haba, sei samay, he Param Pitā Jagadīśvar, sighre ghatoā." "When Asam will be converted from a forest to a flower-garden, the canoes of the rivers will be converted to ships, bamboo cottages will be replaced by buildings of stone and bricks; when there will be thousands and thousands of schools, educational gatherings, dispensaries, hospitals for the poor and destitute; and when people, instead of entertaining jealousy, will cherish love for one another, none will give false evidence for two tolas of opium and will rather throw aside lacs of rupees in such cases: when no one will do mischief to others being offered bribes of crores of rupees; prostitution, opium and wine will be unknown in the country, that time, O God, the Almighty Father, bring about in no time.'

**PATRIOTISM INTRODUCED.** While Vaiṣṇavite prose spoke little of such patriotic ideas, neither the prose of the chronicles nor the Christian prose, so called, could possibly dream of such expressions of thought; and unlike common prose of the chronicles it is idiomatic and natural as the Christian prose is often not. And there is in it something besides,

The patriotic vigour in it is a new element and is a gift of English prose style, to be sure.

Again from the same essay: "He Asam des nibāsi loksakal, tomā-loke alap gami cālei jānibā je tomālokar durawasthār hetu tomālokei. Dekhā, prathamate, ei jagatat vidyār samān āmār mitra nāi, kiono tāk jānile āmi pāo....Hāi hāi, ki ākhepar kathā! He priya mitrasakal, jadi sabhya āru giāṇi aru sādhu habar bānchhā karā; tente topanir parā uthā....Dutiyate, he mor Asamiyā mitrasakal, bidyā jenekai ihakālat upakārak ān eko tene nahai, kintu jadi sabhya āru sukhi haba khojā, tente krisi āru silpa karamat Ingrājar dare pārgot habalai purusārtha karā." 'O inhabitants of Asam, if you think a little, you will find that you are the root of your own miseries. See, first, there is no better friend to us in this world than learning, for it gives us knowledge.... alas, alas, what a matter of regret! O dear friends, if you desire to be civilized and learned and wise, then arise from your sleep.... Secondly, O my Assamese friends, nothing is more useful to us in this world than learning; but if you would be civilized and happy, then try to be expert as the Englishmen in agriculture and industries....

**INFLUENCE OF ENGLISH PROSE:** Besides the element of patriotism, there is here, in a more direct manner, another element. It is the influence of English language, style and syntax. Any Assamese reader, not conversant with the English language, will find several foreign elements even in this small passage, though its vocabulary and grammar are Assamese beyond doubt. Such ways of saying as 'prathamate' 'dvi-tiyate' (first, secondly etc.) were certainly unknown to Assamese before this, though such ways of course help to impress one's points on the readers perhaps better. Again such emphasis with the word 'je' as in "jānibā je....tomālokei" sounds almost as a literal translation of "know that it is you", and was foreign to Assamese as such. This one could call an adulteration of the language had it tended to weaken Assamese; but since it has not done so in the present case, one should call it a re-inforcing or strengthening. This depends entirely on the assimilation or otherwise. This growing influence of English style and syntax is found on many subsequent prominent writers.

Ānandarām was undoubtedly a great personality of this age in spite of his early death. Colonel Hopkinson, the then Commissioner of Assam, compared Anandaram with Raja Ram Mohan Rai of Bengal, and said that considering the peculiar circumstances of Assam in which Anandaram was placed, one is bound to call him even a greater genius than Raja Ram Mohan. In personal appearance and personal magnetism, the two great contemporaries of Assam and Bengal were alike. The *Literature of Bengal*, styles Raja Rām Mohan as the father of Bengali prose in general; and one may call Anandaram also the father of modern Assamese prose with some limitations, and with it added that he was

the first Assamese to join hands with the Missionaries in the fight against the usurpation of Bengali. His essay, *Inglandar Vivaraṇ*, which appeared in *Orunodoi* (Vol. II, No. 4, April 1847) was apparently written in the eighteenth year of his life. He was just twenty years old when with the help of Murray's Encyclopaedia, he issued his *Bhūgol-Sikṣak* consisting of 177 pages, and his *Asamīya-Sikṣak* containing 222 pages, on various subjects as geography, history and science, as the first and second volume respectively of his series known as *Asamīyā Lanār Mitra*. These and such works, though not themselves so great, yet by their promises and ideals, assure Ānandarām a high place in modern Assamese literature.

HEMCHANDRA BARUWA (1835-96) was born at the Rājābāhar village in Sibsagar on the 24th Agrāhāyan, 1757 Sak, corresponding to 10th December, 1835. He was the second son by the second wife of Muktarām Baruwā renowned for his Sanskrit learning and as well-versed in the science of medicine. Hemcandra was taught by his father to commence his learning first with declension of Sanskrit words without introducing the alphabets separately, in his ninth year. Hemcandra thus went on with cursory studies of Sanskrit and studying ancient Assamese works as *Drona Parva* and *Karna Parva* of the Mahabharat, by himself, till the month of Kārtika, 1769 Sak or November, 1847.

His education was stopped totally by the death of his father in cholera, when his uncle a Collectory Sheristadar, Lakshminath Baruwā brought over his deceased brother's family from Rājābāhar to Sibsagar town, where Hemcandra was appointed an apprentice to a clerk in the court on a salary of rupees four per month. Hemcandra's thirst for learning was too great to be stopped by these and such obstacles, and so he found time in the morning and evening to study Sanskrit in the private institution of Urbidhar Sivasāgariā Baruwā and to learn Hindi and Vrajabuli in Devanagari script in the quarters of Captain Brodey, the then Deputy Commissioner, Sibsagar. In this latter quarters too he began to learn a little English, but when his uncle knew it, he stopped it altogether lest his nephew should become an outcaste by learning the language of the Mlecchas (non-Hindus). But even then he did not quite give up his idea of learning English, and he approached the Baptist Missionaries of Sibsagar for it.

Meanwhile Hemcandra used to contribute to *Orunodoi* with particular regard to overhauling the system of orthography of Assamese as used by the Missionaries. In his own autobiographical sketch in 'Jonāki' he wrote: "...Mai tār (Orunodoi) varnavinyās saṁsodhanar nimitte yatna karibalai dharilō. Mor ei cestāt Nidhi Levi Farwell nāmere

etā deśi Christianar parā bar bādhā pāichilō. Si tār guru Brown Sāhābar varnaviṇyāsar pranālir ek āngulo larcār hoāk mahā pāp yen bhābichil. . . . Tār kathāt Nidhiye jancarek Dāngariāro mat laichil.” Any way, it was Hemcandra who succeeded in the long run, and with the help of Reverend Comfort he could get the use of the old Assamese letter ‘wa’ re-instated in the orthography. But everything was all right only after he began to print his own books commencing with his Ādi-Pāth in the seventies of the last century.

It may be observed in passing, that in the courts, knowledge of English was not necessary in those days for the ordinary run of clerks all of whom rather hated it. Only the Munsiffs and Sheristadars had to know a little English. Hemcandra’s knowledge of English, in spite of the odds, grew sufficiently more, and it could not be kept a secret. Now his uncle too instead of rebuking Hemcandra for learning English rather sought his help in translating certain important documents of the court into English. In 1858, Hemcandra became a Revenue Peshkar in the Golaghat court, and then served as a second master in the Sibsagar Government High School, both on temporary measures. Then he became a Revenue Mahafes at Rs. 25 per menses which post he held till 1862. In August of the same year, Hemcandra was appointed a translator at Gauhati by Major Agnew, the then Judicial Commissioner of Assam. Thence he was promoted to be the office Superintendent of the Commissioner which post he retained till he retired on the 1st January, 1881, with a pension of Rs. 83-5-3 pies. He was twice offered the post of an Extra Assistant Commissioner in 1875 and 1876 which he twice refused lest it should be a hindrance to his literary culture.

Hemcandra Baruwā’s genius is manifest in his acquisition of a thorough knowledge of different languages as English and Sanskrit, besides Assamese and Hindi etc., without attending any regular educational institution. As a matter of fact, next to Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, Hemcandra was one of the few persons of Assam who had the reputation of having a command over the English language, and people from different places of the province drew near him to get important representations drafted by him in English. And this knowledge of English he acquired secretly and stealthily in the quarters of English officials or Christian Missionaries. His command of Sanskrit was also no less, though this knowledge too he acquired in no regular way nor in any regular institution. Hemcandra himself composed and read an excellent Sanskrit poem on the occasion of Sir Stuart Bailey’s first entrance to Gauhati as the Chief Commissioner of Assam; and

this Sanskrit poem was not only greatly admired by the audience, but was committed to memory by many learned Assamese gentlemen.

By the Government notification No. 2152 dated the 18th June, 1873, Hemcandra competed as many as 58 writers both native and American and secured the first prize of Rs. 500 from the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal and Assam, for the best Assamese primer *Ādi Pāth*. He was also given to translate the Government pamphlet, *Way to Health*, into Assamese as *Asamiyā Svāsthyar Niam*. Thus Hemcandra obtained Rs. 1,100 as rewards from the Government, besides securing Government's recognition in kinds and coins for helping Babu Rajendralal Mitra in collecting old Sanskrit manuscripts from Assam.

Early in April, 1856, appeared such articles as "Anek biā karā ajugut" (It is wrong to marry many) written by one 'Śrī Sonar Chānd' (Gold Moon) in the *Orunodoi* (Vol. XI, No. 4) who must have been no other than Hem (Gold) Candra (Moon) himself. Even later writers like Pānindranāth Gagai who exactly followed Hemcandra's footsteps in compiling Assamese primers, used this very name as "Sonar Chānd Dekā Baruwā" in his *Lara Sikshā*, the next best primer in Assamese till this day, evidently making a respectful reference to Hemcandra Baruwā. In 1859, Hemcandra's *Asamiyā Vyākaraṇ* was issued by the American Baptist Mission Press, and the same work with some modifications was reprinted in 1886 as *Asamiyā Larār Vyākaraṇ*, making it specially suitable for school children.

**AN ASSAMESE JOHNSON:** Hemcandra's monumental work in the Assamese language undoubtedly is his *Hem-Koṣ* which however could not be brought to light in his life-time, not till 1900, or four years after the author's death. But about December, 1892, he brought out an school edition of it, and called it *Parhāsaliā Abhidhān*; and then brought out *Samkṣipta Hem-Koṣ*, evidently another abridged edition. His *Hem-Koṣ* was the fruit of his life-long labours and he took the English Webster Dictionary as his model, and it was a single-handed work as that of Dr. Johnson in English. It contained the etymology and meaning of as many as 22,346 Assamese words and was undoubtedly a great improvement on Dr. Bronson's work.

Hemcandra's other works are his *Pāthmālā*, with stories from English and Sanskrit works and lessons on scientific and other subjects for education of the young people; *Kāniār Kirttan*, showing the vices of the Assamese opium-eaters; and his *Bāhire Rang-Cang Bhitare Koā-Bhāturi* depicting other vices of the Assamese society, and the irreligious deeds of the so-called religious people. In his English work, *Marriage System in Assam*, Hemcandra, an early advocate of

widow marriage, supports his view from the practices in vogue in Assam. All these works show the ardent reformer in Hemcandra, with sweeping satires and even brutal attacks of his *Kāñiār Kirttan* and *Koā-Bhāturi*. In any such respects, Hemcandra seems to have anticipated his family descendant and literary successor Lakshminath Bezbaruwā who carried such traditions on. Early in his life Hemcandra lost his wife in 1865 after a female child was born to her in 1863. On principle, he did not marry a second time, the reasons of which he well puts forth in his autobiographical sketch.

Soon after his retirement in 1881, Hemcandra undertook the editing of the Anglo-Assamese weekly published from Gauhati by two eminent Assamese, Manik Candra Baruwā and Annadaram Phukan, then forming a Company as Baruwā-Phukan Brothers in 1832. Its subscribers numbered about nine hundred. The paper, styled *Assam News*, was very ably edited by this veteran litterateur and it is through this paper that the present etymological system of orthography of Assamese was first fully re-vindicated and re-established. It then became the source of inspiration for other writers who gradually began to adopt this regular system. The paper, whatever be the reason, came to be discontinued from July, 1885; but its influence survived long after.

**AN UNOFFICIAL DICTATOR:** Hemcandra was a towering personality of his age, no doubt, and a worthy unofficial dictator, to be sure. In his personal manners and whims even in his idiosyncracies, he had many things resembling George Bernard Shaw of the present age. He was indeed a difficult man to approach and was certainly rigid and unsparing in his ways. He decried and hated all shams and hypocrisies of the orthodox society being himself affiliated to it by birth, and he put them all to derision and brutal laughter in his writings, and by his personal habits. He was a strong advocate of widow-marriage, as we have said, from his early life. He was of course touched with the spirit of a reformer.

Hemcandra's true literary output was of course not much, but within the small range he proved himself to be a powerful prose-writer undoubtedly. This is manifest in his dramatic sketches of *Kāñiār Kirttan* (*Glories of Opium-eaters*) and in the merciless caricatures of *Koā-bhāturi* (or the hollow society); we quote an extract from the latter: "Korkhaniā Satrar Govardhan Dew Ātā param Vaiṣṇav, Kaṁsa rajār candan-jogāti kūjī bair vaṁsār jāt, sāksāt gurūjanār parā paramārthar bhāg nowā Gopināth Dew Ātār parināti. Ghoṣā Kirttan Ratnāwali, ei tini khani sāstra prabhur osthāgra: iāt bāje Gunmālā bhatimā, capay. totav, eibilāk mukhe ākhai futār dare fute. Bargitāt Gosāidew ene pārgat, tēo puatiā niśā gīt dharile ocarar gachbilākeo gā

laroār chalere tāl dhare, āru kukur-śiāleo premat bāul hai rāg diye....” Here is described a certain fictitious figure of the head of a religious institution who claims a fabulous origin from the humpbacked woman who was so devoted to Kṛṣṇa. Then he makes a satirical reference to his superficial knowledge of the scriptures in Assamese, and then to his proficiency in music, saying. “This religious head was such a past master in singing religious songs that when he would begin singing before dawn, the trees near by would, by way of moving, mark the cymbal, and the dogs and jackals would join his tune being intoxicated with divine love.” Here is the force and playfulness of a current or flow of language that knows no obstacles; and shows a master prose-writer.

In his famous autobiographical sketch, Hemcandra shows his capability as a master of serious dignified prose in measured language and compact style, neither verbose nor ornamental nor Sanskritic or heavy, but elegant, logical and forceful: “Mai punarāi biā nakarālō. Āji-kālī āmār samājar awasthālai cāi bhārjyā marā puruṣe punarāi biā karoā gotai nindania. Mai bhābi cālō: mor bhārjyār nāhai mor mrityu howā hale teōr ki awasthā halheten? Teō mariche; tathāpi mor icchā halei mai etā kia, tinitā bā adhik biā kariba pārō: kintu bidhawā howār pācat punar biār nām loā mātrei teōr jāti galheten, samāje barjileheten āru teō jiwantate marā yen hai thākileheten. E kene asangat! kene ajugut!!” ‘I did not marry a second time. Considering our present (social) circumstances it is totally condemnable for the widowers to marry. I thus pondered over the subject: what would have taken place if death would overtake me and not my wife? She is now dead, and yet I can contract three, why, more marriages; but just after my wife would become a widow, the moment when she would utter the name of marriage, she would be outcaste, discarded by society, and she would know what is death even in life. O, how inconsistent! how wrong!!’

He concludes: “Śāstra nālāge juktilai cālei bidhawār biāt je kono doṣ nāi, tāk bujiba pāri....Pūjanīya Vidyāsāgare bidhawā bibāh ye śāstra-siddha iāk sapramān kariyei mane mane nāthākil, āponār putekare saite vidhawāk biā dile. Kālar sōtat teō uti gal, kintu tār bālit teō yi khojar sāc thai gaiche, si cirakālalai thākiba, lupta nahay: sei khojar pācat calotā mānuh āmār deśat olāba ketiā? Pratidh-vaniye sudhiche—‘ketiā?’. ‘Not to speak of its sanction in the scriptures, one can see that there is no harm in widow marriage even when one comes to reason.... The revered Vidyāsagar did not keep quiet by simply proving that widow-marriage is sanctioned by religious works of the Hindus, but he got his son married to a widow. He has drifted away in the current of age, but the foot-prints, which he has left on the sands of time, will remain forever and never be lost. When will there be such men in our country who will follow his foot-steps? The echo resounds—‘When?’ This is undoubtedly a vigorous prose, and certainly far in advance of his senior contemporary Anandaram.



Such coinages as 'samay bālit' (in the sands of time)—H. W. Long fellow) and the prose style in general certainly show a stamp of English influence; but it has been thoroughly assimilated so that the influence of English prose style tends rather to strengthen and invigorate his prose in Assamese.

Like the Jupiter among the planets, and like Dr. Johnson in the eighteenth century English literature, Hemcandra Baruwā occupies a unique place in the nineteenth century Assamese literature. But like the small bag and baggage of a Dictionary and *Lives of the poets* with which Dr. Johnson climbed the summit of his fame, Hemcandra's bag and baggage also consisted of his dictionary, *Kāniār Kirttan* and *Koā-Bhāturi*, and with them he rose to the peak of eminence. As a matter of fact, neither rose into their prominence by sheer virtues of their own literary works nor did they constitute their personalities. Whether it is their personal magnetism or their command over their native language and literature in general, their eminences and towering personalities in the literatures of their own days are indisputable.

GUNABHIRAM BARUWA (1837-94) was born at Jorhat in 1759 Sak to Raṇarām Baruwā by his second wife. They were near relations of Anandaram Dhekial Phukan and so when Ranaram died the following year, Anandaram took charge, whenever he was capable of it, of this orphan and the widow. Thus it was that it was Anandaram who sent over Gunabhiram to Calcutta and got him admitted into the Colootala Branch school there. Guṇābhiram was thus one of the few Assamese students who were educated in Calcutta before the University of Calcutta was established. He passed the Entrance Examination in 1854, securing scholarship, and got himself admitted into the Presidency College the same year.

The Calcutta New Press was purchased and established by Anandaram in the name of Guṇābhiram in 1852. Guṇābhiram left his First Arts Course and began to study Law in the Presidency College. Then on the 18th Agrahayan, 1779 Śak (about December, 4, 1857) Guṇābhirām was married to Braja Sundarī, and this union also was brought about by Anandaram as the guardian. When unexpectedly the latter died on the 16th June, 1859, Guṇābhirām was compelled to return from Calcutta and find out some means of maintenance for both the families.

Guṇābhirām however had not to wait long, and as early as October, 1859, he was appointed a Sub-Assistant Commissioner; and in January, 1860, he was promoted to be an Extra Assistant Commissioner.

Immediately he arranged to send Anandaram's first son Radhikaram (born December, 1854) to London for foreign education; educated his second son, Annadārām (born December 27, 1856), in India and took all possible care of Anandārām's daughter (born January 9, 1853) and his widow. Guṇābhirām soon outshone all his brother officers in the provincial Civil Service till he retired on the 31st March, 1890.

Guṇābhirām's family life was not as happy as it could be expected. His first wife Braja Sundari paid the debt of nature as early as July, 1867, without leaving any issue. An ardent advocate of widow-marriage as Guṇābhirām had been since his school life, he married Viṣṇupriyā, the widow of Paraśūrām Baruwā, soon in 1870, and had several issues by her. In February, 1871, his eldest daughter, Svarnalātā, and on the 2nd June, 1874, his son Karunābhirām were born, and they were succeeded by some others. Guṇābhirām's daughter, Svarnalātā, also became a widow, and she too was given in marriage a second time. He wanted to pass his retired life in Calcutta and accordingly he purchased a plot of land there and would erect a building soon. But his wife Viṣṇupriyā died on the 26th March, 1892, and Guṇābhirām himself died just two years later, on the 25th March, 1894. Their eldest son, Karunābhirām, died at Madhupur on the 12th July, 1893, and the second son, Kamalābhirām, died on the 30th November, 1894, after passing the Entrance Examination. Jñānadābhirām Baruwā, Barrister-at-Law and a prominent Assamese litterateur, the youngest son of this great family, only survived.

Guṇābhirām studied Assamese literature from his early years. This is proved by a notification of Mādhawdew's *Nām-Ghoṣā* edited by Guṇābhirām, dated 10th Agrabāyan, 1778 Śak (about 24th November, 1856, while still a student of the Presidency College, Calcutta), as corrected by his Holiness the Āuniāti Satrādhikār, (*Orunodoi*, Vol. XII, No. 7; July, 1857). As early as 1858, while returning from Calcutta, Gunabhiram wrote his drama, *Rām-Navamī*, on the boat. No copy of this drama was known save the one said to have been preserved in the India Office Library, London.

A TRAGEDY ON WIDOW MARRIAGE. Guṇābhirām's drama, *Rām-Navamī*, written in 1858, was apparently his earliest original work. It was a beautiful tragedy woven about the subject of widow-marriage, the most burning topic of the day. The Widow Marriage Act was passed in 1856 when Guṇābhirām was in Calcutta. He was not only present when the first widow marriage was celebrated in the Sookea Street, Calcutta; but he was also present during two or three such other subsequent marriages. Thus the subject must have been very

keenly felt by him. The story element of the drama is that *Navamī* was a widowed girl who had secret love with a youngman, *Rāmachandra*. The love was discovered and as usual in such cases, the hero and the heroine with the members of their families were ostracised by the religious head. The latter however had a dream the night following which he related in the morning to his disciples, and all and sundry, as follows: "Kāli rāti ejan, kalākai cuti-cāpar Bāmuṇe bahut hul thakā ekhan bagā kāpor pindhi āhi mok kale, Herā Gosāi, coācon bāru mor kāporat kimān hul! Tumi natunkai ākau etā kiya bindhilā?" 'Last night one Brahman who had a dark complexion and short stature, and with a white cloth on, pinned with thorns, came to me and said, 'O Gosāi, look at me and see how thickly my cloth is pinned with thorns! Why have you then pricked me anew with yet another thorn?'

This evidently refers to *Īśvar Candra Vidyāsāgar*, the great advocate of widow marriage, whose enthusiasm is mainly responsible for the Widow Marriage Act of 1856. The Gosāi then repents his action. Here the story ends and the drama stops with a concluding poem or song beginning with "Sunibāhā sabhasad jan: Rām-Navamīr vivaran", and praising the efforts of *Īśvar Candra Vidyāsāgar*. The Gosāi did not join the chorus and it appears that the orders regarding ostracism stood though the Gosāi was repentant. So the drama which really advocates widow marriage appeals for the abolition of the social custom.

*Anandarām Dhekiāl Phukanar Jīwan Caritra* is the next work of *Gunabhiram* which first appeared in 1880. This is the first biographical work of the modern type and is almost a model still. This may fittingly be compared with *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, giving a precise and detailed account of the *Anandaram's* life and is at the same time a most unique work depicting the history of the times in a most remarkable and accurate manner. Every sentence in that work is replete with facts. The next and no less important work of *Gunabhiram* was his *Asam Buranji*, issued in 1884. No one compares *Kāśirām's* work, for the earlier work was almost a mere translation of the old *Ahom* chronicles, while the latter is an original work written in modern and scientific lines. *Asam Bandhu*, a monthly literary journal in Assamese was *Gunabhiram's* next literary adventure which was first issued in 1885 from Calcutta, some time after *Hemcandra's Assam News* ceased to exist. It was a nice magazine containing various useful contributions on literature, history, science, industries and such other subjects. Among the most useful contributions in it that are still remembered are the Editor's own illuminating historical article "Asam-Atīt āru Vartamān" (Assam-its past and present) continued in several issues; *Lambodar Barā's* excellent long satirical essay "Sadānandar Kalāghu-

mati" (Sadānanda's Doze); and many exquisite poems of Satyanath Bara, and so forth. The paper discontinued during the second year, after sixteen issues were out. Though comparatively very shortlived, the paper contributed a good deal towards creating a set of new writers among whom were the great writers of the following period.

*Kathin Sabdar Rahasya Vyākhyā* is Gunabhiram's posthumous work, originally appearing anonymously in the Assamese monthly *Bijuli*. In it he gives humorous interpretations of words, which are original, innocent and kindly jokes, some almost at his own cost. 'Yadu—What is a Hākim (Magistrate)? Professor=Hā (Oh) + Kim=(what). That is, Oh, what a wonderful thing it is? For the Magistrate's nature cannot be known. They may save you or kill you.' "Jadu=What is summons?" Professor—"Saman or Śaman (Sanskrit, god of death). Summons is inevitable as death itself." 'Yadu=Sir, what is a Babu?' Professor=Bā or bāyuvat (like the wind) + bu or buddhi: For a Bābu has intelligence as quick and fickle as the wind.' 'Yadu=Sir, what is a school? Professor=Iskule niskulam bhavet, that is, a school is that which spoils the *kuls* or castes of every body'. Yadu=Sir, then I am not sending my son to school any more. Professor=what new things do the English have? They are creating their dialect simply by changing the forms of our words.'

Besides these works in print there is a sufficient amount of matter in the leaves of the old journals not presented in book form. Among the most valuable of such articles are his "Saumār Bhraman" (Travels in Upper Assam), Asamat Mānar Sehchoā (The last portion of the misrule of the Burmese in Assam), and "Alikhit Buranji" (unwritten History) appearing in such magazines as *Jonāki*. It is needless to say that a collection of such works would be further contribution to the literature. Gunabhiram also had some mastery in the poetic art. The poems like "Ādya-Sakti-Stotra" and "Īśvar Candra Vidyā Sāgarar Vaikuṇṭha prayānat Bhārat Bilāp" appearing in *Bijuli* of Śak 1812 (1890 A.D.) anonymously as Gurudatta's are Gunabhiram's own. Some of his other poems also find place in Padmahās Goswami's collection, *Padyamālā*.

**CONTRIBUTION TO LITERATURE.** Gunābhīram contributed no little to modern Assamese prose. He had a unique style, quite simple and vigorous, an illustration of which may be given from his article "Saumār Bhraman": "Ei Asam deś āmār mātṛbhūmi. Āmi iātei upajichō. Iātei siksā 'pāichō. Ei deśar nāmei āmi samsār hātāt bikā hai āchō. Jananī yene ādaranīā āru pūjaniā, ei āmār janmabhūmio āmār pakṣe tene maram āru sewār thali. Yāk yi bhāl pāi, tāk si barkai śālāge; sei śālā-gibalagā bastur yimān.ki durbalatā thāok, yimān ki āsoāh thāok, seiōr seiōr nedekhe. Ene bhāv durbal āru svārthapar haleo e ati manoram. Iāt pritr ucca ādarśa poā jāi." "This land of Asam is our mother coun-

try. It is here that we have been born. It is here that we have been brought up. We have been sold in the market of the world in the name of this country. Our mother-country is an object of our love and reverence in the same way as our mothers are worthy of admiration and worship. One praises one's object of love very much, and is blind to whatever defects or weaknesses it may have. Such ways, however weak or selfish they may be, are admirable; for there is the high ideal of love.'

Such a prose style is certainly simpler and more natural than that of Anandaram, but is of course less powerful than that of Hemcandra. Gunabhiram and Anandaram, anticipated Hemcandra in whom there is really the culmination of the nineteenth century Assamese literature. Like the Vaiṣṇava writers who used to style Caitanyadev as the Moon and Śaṅkardew as the Sun, one may also say that the firmament of the nineteenth century Assamese literature was illumined by Gunabhiram the Moon and Hemcandra the Sun, which comparison also reveals their personal character. The Shavian whims of Hemcandra made his high personality so difficult, and Guṇābhirām's accomodating and obliging nature made him amiable. Hemcandra, hard and stiff and unsparing as he was, reformed the earlier system of orthography with an iron hand and founded it on rock. All the same, Gunabhiram undoubtedly occupies a unique place in modern Assamese literature, which may only be next to Hemcandra and Anandaram, as a pioneer and as a master prose-writer.

GERMINATION OF MODERN POETRY. Like the modern prose, modern poetry too had in this period its rise that was slow but sure, and was first accelerated by the Christian missionaries, American or native. Just two instances of such religious poetry, one anonymous, perhaps from the pen of an American, and the other from the pen of a native Christian. The former appeared in the *Orunodoi* (Vol. XII, No. 6, June, 1857) as Saru Simuel (Simuel the junior):

Saru Simuel ji samay: nisāt suni Prabhur māt.  
 Ananda janmil tār riday: jāni Īśvar ācil tāt.  
 Kene sukhār bhāgi si: Prabhur priya santānti.  
 Jādī dayāl Prabhujan: mot sunāba subha bāni.  
 Guṇāi pāpar parākram: diba tār parā mukti.  
 Teōlai prem pāpalai bhay: mor mañ juriba nicay.  
 Kintu sāstrat teor bachan: etiao āmāt janoā hai.  
 Teō māṭice pāpi man: molai ahā anirbhāi.  
 Ene bacan suni ānandit: teō sunāice sei puthit.  
 Prabhur nāmat āsrai lai: nirbhāi thākim ghor. nisāt:  
 Teō mor koṣat jētiā hai: thāke dur sakalo utpāt.  
 Teōr āgat nichei mai: pāpat karim ati bhāi.  
 Sāstra parhā sunā kai: kām Simuele saite mai.  
 Ridayat kaok prabhu dāyāl: bujāi bākya sudhāsāy.  
 Mandirat jei bar somām: kaok Prabhu pātico kām.

It is prose in verse and devoid of poetic diction.

Nidhi Levi, the first Assamese convert to Christianity and one of the trio of the great Christian litterateurs, Brown-Bronson-Farwell, had his contributions to Assamese verses too. Several of his poems appeared in the *Orunodoi* those deserving special mention being "Vinay Vacan", "Svaragar Vivaran," "Narakar Vivaran," "Prabhu Jisu Christar Awatār," "Nistārar Upāi" etc.

Sunā sarvajān, vinay vacan, ridaye diok bās:  
 Pāp tarihar, Jesu pad sār, nāhi anya āru ās.  
 Tene dayātur, āpuni Īsvar, Purna Brahma sanātan:  
 Jesu bine ār, sakalo asār, bhābi dekha sarvajān.  
 Teōr prem ati, pātakir prati, bhakti stuti kare jei:  
 Thale bisvāsile, khedjukta hale, mukti path pāba sei.  
 Jadihe nemānā, bhunjiba jātanā, narak sāsti ananta:  
 Tetiā tomār, nahaba nistār, dahiba agni prachanda.  
 Sadā sarvakhyān, dagdha haba man, nahaba kono sāntvana:  
 Indri ādi jata, sava haba naṣṭa, ātmā he pāba jātanā.  
 Bhai bandhu gan, tiri putra dhan, tate kicu nāhi haba;  
 Sakalo asār, kono nahai kār, tetiā sange naraba.  
 Jata din dehe, ātmā thiti rahe, bole save āponār;  
 Nayan mudile, acetan hale, kono nahai, sangī kār.  
 Ei hetu sun, haiok caitan, karā Jesu pad sār;  
 Bhābi dekhā jata, sakalo anitya, Prabhuhe trānādhikār.  
 Jen brikhya dāle, pakhi gai sakale, danda ki dudanda thāke:  
 Sei rūpe jnān, dehat jiwan, nichaye bole savāke.  
 Dharma path dharā, teji pāp herā, bhājio Christa saran:  
 Pap andhakāre, kia ghuri mare, mudiā dūti nayan.  
 Diptite saghan, karile gaman, apamān nāhi haba:  
 Andhakāre bhāi, chalile sadāi, pathate ujanti khāba.  
 Ei hetu sun, mor nivedan, Christat karā āsrai;  
 Jesu bine ār, nāhike udhār jāniba nichaye bhai.

Here the writer exploits Vaiṣṇavite poetic diction. In the two examples of Christian poetry by a native and a non-native we find almost a world of difference in presentation of ideas. The poem "Saru Simuel," perhaps by an American, though written in Assamese, appears still foreign to the ears both in style and thought; but in the next poem by Nidhi Levi, a native Christian, one feels at home both in matter and manner, only if the word 'Jesu' would be substituted by 'Krishna'.

Besides this religious or Christian poetry, there was a mass of secular poetry appearing in several volumes and issues of the *Orunodoi*, (Neog's *Kāvya Pratibhā*, 1935) as "Kalikatār Sukhiāti (Reputation of Calcutta) in Vol. VI, No. 3 (March, 1851) by Kinārām Satriā; "Cāpā" Khanār Vivaran" (Description of the Printing Press) in Vol. VIII, No. 2 (February, 1853) by Dayārām Chetiā; Guāhātir Vivaran (Description

of Gauhāti) in Vol. VIII, No. 6 (June, 1853) by Dharmakanta Burhagohāi of Gauhati, a descendant of Purnananda Burhagohai, Prime Minister of some last Ahom kings, "Nagāo Jilār Varnan" (Description of the Nagāo Town) in Vol. XII, No. 10, (October, 1857). The descriptions are given in a matter-of-fact way, but this departure of Assamese writers from the domain of religion to that of the mudane world is worthy of note, and this point has been emphasised.

**VISWESWAR VAIDYADHIPA.** Beyond the pale of this Christian literature and outside the *Orunodoi* circle, a sufficient number of writers must have cultured Assamese poetry independently, during this period. A few of such writers may be mentioned, and one of the earliest of them must have been Viśveśvar Vaidyādhīpa whose interesting work "Belimārar Buranji" has been recovered and published of late (*D.H.A.S.*, Assam). It is a chronicle of Assam containing the events from 1786 to 1819 in verse, and has such colophons of autobiographical nature giving some clue about the writer:

Surya Vipra kule jāt: Viśveśvar nāme khyāt.  
Tehē pad biracilā: Svargadewe ājnā dilā.  
Vaidya Baruwār nāti: Param ajnānī āti.  
Nākhātiā āchilek: Vaidyādhīpa pātilek.  
Śunā sabhāsad lok: Hari, Hari ghoṣiok.

This says that Viśveśvar, a Daibajna by caste and grandson of a head of physicians, was given the title of Vaidyādhīp (the master of Physicians) by the king by whose orders he composed this chronicle in verse. Apparently this must have been king Puṇandar Siṃha (1832-38) under whose orders Viśveśvar wrote this work, its date of composition being identical with his reign.

Viśveśvar still follows the Vaiṣṇavite method and diction in writing his history in the British period, and besides using the usual metres as Pad, Dulari, Chabi, Lechāri etc. he employs two rather rare metres. One is the metre named *muktāwali*, describing the lament of the wives of Purnānanda Burhāgohai:

Hā Hari Hari	Svāmi gaila mari:
Āilō rājya eri	pailō Kāmapuri e.
Dhan jan bāri sakalo taite thākilā.	
Tomār samān	mantri nāhi an
Śatru sthāne sthāne	karilā nirijyān e
Akantaka kari samaste bhūmi pālilā.	
Tomār biyoge	bancileka bhoge
Daivar samjoge	paila mahā roge e
Bipatti kālat āpuni tumi marilā.	
Vidhi birambile	Māneo khedile
Juddhato hāri	bale noāri e
Āmār kapāle Vidhātā hena lekhilā.	





also uses many new words, imported by the British rule, in his composition.

*Kali Bhārāt Buranji* is also a unique work of great poetic worth besides its historical value. It also shows a Vaiṣṇavite outlook on life and depicts the ephemeral world as such. The following is a poem in the *jumuri* metre describing the tragic scene of king Candrakanta Siṃha being taken to Tarātālī on foot.

Candrakānta Mahārajā: Candrar samān tejā.  
Nām Candrakānta kay: Candra yen prakāśay.  
Karilā angak khun: tabhu śānta nohe man.  
Nagarar bāj kari: laiā jāi dūte dhari.  
Nāhi eko rath jān: meghe kare bariṣaṇ.  
Nāhi daṇḍa chatra tāta: mātthe ek jāpi mātra.  
Panth panka āche hui: bhūmi gati cali yāi.  
Dicai Bhogdai pār hay: lok save āche cāi.  
Prajā save berhi yāi: kato hiā dhākurai.  
Citrar putali yena: hena rājā bhailā kena.  
Sāmānyar kon lekhā: Hari pāwe karā āśā  
Gucibe durgati dukh: nijānanda pāibā sukh.

DINANATH BEZBARUWA (1813-95), son of Kṛṣṇarām Bezbaruwā, was born in 1735 Śak. He lost his mother and father in his fourth and nineteenth years respectively. He then became a physician to king Purandar Siṃha. When the charge of the whole of the kingdom was taken over by the East India Company, Dinanāth was first appointed a Mahafej and then a Dewāni Sheristadar. He was appointed a Munsiff in 1861 at Nowgong, whence later he was transferred to Barpeta, Tezpur, North Lakhimpur and finally to Gauhati whence he retired in 1873. His death took place on the 27th May, 1895. Besides writing his *Bezbaruwār Baṃśāwali* (1844 A.D.) he wrote one *Guru Caritra* on the life of Śaṅkardew and Mādhawdew, and also rendered *Utkal Khanda* of the *Skanda Purān* and *Ācārya Saṃhati* of *Hara Gaurī Sambād* found in *Rudra Yamal*, into Assamese verses of the Vaiṣṇavite style, but they are mostly unpublished. His literary zeal was inherited by his son Lakshminath Bezbaruwa.

RAGHUDEW GOSWAMI, a late Satrādhikār of Jakhalābandhā, Kaliā-bar, Nagāo, is the author of one *Hitopades Kāvya*, rendered from the Sanskrit work of this name into Assamese verse of Vaiṣṇavite style and diction, about 1880-86 A.D., as can be inferred from the following autobiographical verses:

Mahādi dipak tāte kariā śakat:  
Bindu gaj diā pāche kariā yugut.  
Mithun māsar jānā Rohinik pāi:  
Samāpati bhaila śāstra pad samudāi..  
Jakhalā bandhār Satra Kaliābarat:  
Amār janam jānā sei je satrat...

His verses follow the Vaiṣṇavite manner, and there is nothing in particular to note about it. He has usually a smooth flow of verse and considerable command over the style.

Magadh deśar rājā ati manohar:  
Val virjye parākrame nāhi samasar.  
Putra ek āche tār dvitīya bhāskar:  
Vikrame atul sito rājār kumār.  
Mṛgayā kārjyat sito param nipuṇ:  
Mṛgayā karante man majil takhan.  
Eka dinā prabhātate rājār kumār:  
Mṛgayā karite gailā banar bhitār.

GOPINATH CAKRAVARTI is another writer whose poetical work *Kalanka Bhanjan* belongs to this period. He writes in a colloquial style of lower Assam dialect, though following the Vaiṣṇavite style, and his composition and thought are both crude.

Kṛṣṇar carañe dhari, bole Rādhā Vrajesvarī,  
Śunā he Murulidhārī, mor manaduhkha:  
Gāot jigilā āche giri, sakale bole bāduā tirī  
Ei duhkhe ulyāba naro mukha.  
Yadi furibā yāo kāro bārī āhil setu bar gurikhār tirī  
Sakale bole hāo cāo pai bāi.

But it is not without some natural diction and charm here and there.

LALIT CANDRA GOSWAMI (1845-1900), late Satrādhikar of Nārāyanpur, Nalbari, rendered Gopal Bhatta's Sanskrit work into Assamese verses as *Keli Rahasya* in the Vaiṣṇavite style, and the work is complete in 194 verses. It is not devoid of a poetic diction, though the language and style are rather a bit loose.

Naukāi āsi uthā tumi, asta gaila dinamāṇi.  
Meghar garjani atisay:  
Daś diś bhailā mlān, karā Kṛṣṇa avadhān,  
Cikimiki kare tamomay....  
Āru dekhā meghe garje, mūrar upare tarje  
Surya eve prāi asta bhailā.  
Naukākhān āche tīre pracanṇa bātāse tare  
Āsfālate bhingā yena bhailā.

PURNAKANTA DEWA SARMA rendered *Nal-Caritra* into Assamese verses after the Vaiṣṇavite style in 1889, and wrote many works besides. He was a resident of Dibrugarh. *Hit-kathā* (1878) and *Jñānāṅkur* are his contributions in prose. There are other minor writers of this period like Padmahās Goswami, author of *Sikṣāsār*, and compiler of *Padyamālā*.

RAMAKANTA CAUDHARI (1846-89) of Abhimanyu Badh Kāvya fame was undoubtedly a torch-bearer of a new era. He was the son of Lakṣmikānta who collected Government revenue from the circles of Khātā and Batāhgilā. After passing the Entrance examination, he

entered the headquarter office of the Deputy Commissioner, Gauhati, as an Assistant, and was thence transferred to Goālpārā, Dhubri and such other places. He returned to the Gauhati court again as a Sheristadar, but died in harness about January, 1889.

Ramākānta, an intelligent and gifted youth, followed Michael Madhusudan Dutt's blank verse and experimented it in Assamese to write his *Abhimanyu Badh Kāvya*. It was issued as early as 1875, and was of course successful.

Daś din yuddha kari Bhīṣma mahābali  
 Yetiā śuilā bire śar śayanat,  
 Mahārathī Pāndaveo ānanda manere  
 Bajāila dhāk dhol singā karatāl  
 Jaga jhampa bheri dabā. Āpuni Śrī Hari  
 Nij bādyā saṅkha lai fuāi vijay  
 Ghor nāde buruāi sakal sabad  
 Haraṣilā Pāndavak, śagar samān  
 Apār Kaurav sainya purila śabade.  
 Hāhākār rana thali svāmi nidhanant.  
 Uthaliā sabda sindhu senār bhitār  
 Larālā pātāl svarga, larālā medinī,  
 Merudanda samanvite. Sabade sabade  
 Bhāngiā parilā yen dharāt ākās.

As the music of the lines prove, this is good blank verse with ideas overflowing each line of fourteen letters, and having a poetic diction and force befitting his subject. He is also the author of one early mythological drama, *Sita Haran*. Ramākānta shows his originality in both his works.

BALADEW MAHANTA (1850-95) is a pioneer in the short poems, mostly didactic, where he makes a mark and displays originality. His poems were long the model of subsequent writers. His simple poem "Kāuri aru Śiāl" (The Crow and the Jackal) displays excellent poetic expressions:

Mahā mahā rājā yata āśār nidāne kata  
 Karichil kārjya sumahat:  
 Sisavak mane kari buddhi bal anusari  
 Calibai lāgiba satat.  
 Amṛtar āśā kari bahu puruṣārtha dhari  
 Śāgar mathile dewāsure:  
 Strī-ratnar pratyāśāi kaṣṭe bhrami nānā thāi  
 Trilok jinile Lankeśvare.  
 Abhishtā siddhir hetu samudrat bāndhi setu  
 Mahārāj Dasarath- sut:  
 Bhāluk bāndar lai Lankāt prabiṣṭa hai  
 Juddha Karichil adabhut.

Here the theme is so simple, but the language and style has a majesty approaching almost classical dignity. Unfortunately Baladew's

contribution to poetry is not much in quantity, but there are perhaps few educated Assamese who have not got at least a few lines of his poems by heart. He was a descendant of Bhavānanda Sāud alias Nārāyaṇ. Baladew's forefathers migrated thence to Khāgarījan (present Nagāo), and his father settled at Māyāmari Elengi Satra, four miles off from the Nagāo town, and here he met Naranath Mahanta, a well known prose-writer of his time, and studied literature. He left his only daughter who in turn leaves a grand-daughter. Baladew's only contribution to Assamese poetry is his *Ujupāth*, issued in 1884. His prose works were varied and include some school books.

BHOLANATH DAS (1858-1929) was born in July, 1858, at Nagāo to his father Bāpiram and mother Padmāwati of the Bākhar Barā family, well known in the place, as their only son. In 1879, Bholanath passed the Entrance Examination and got himself admitted into the Metropolitan College, Calcutta. But soon after he had to return home for his mother's serious illness, and was appointed a District Surveyor of Nowgong. This job did not suit him, and he preferred to be the Last Master at Nagāo High School, whence he in turn became an Education clerk, and then a Survey teacher of Nagāo and Sibsagar.

Then he was posted in the Subordinate Civil Service and became a Sub-Deputy Collector in 1888. Gradually he became a first class officer and a second-class Magistrate and Assistant Settlement Officer. He performed the re-Survey and re-Settlement work of Gauhati, and then retired on the 12th December, 1912. Even after this he was engaged in other public activities till 1927. He died on the 2nd July, 1929, at his own residence at Gauhati from a stroke of apoplexy.

In 1882 and 1883 he published his *Kavitā Mālā*, volumes I and II respectively. These poems saw the light of day earlier in the *Asam Bandhu* magazine and earned sufficient name and fame as poems of the new age. In 1884 were issued his *Cintā-Taranginī*, parts I and II. His *Sita Haraṇ Kāvya* written in Assamese blank verse in imitation of Michael Madhusudan Dutta, appeared in parts earlier in the periodical *Asam Bilāsini* (1871-83) and was issued independently in 1888. This later work created enough sensation, good and bad, for it was a servile imitation of Madhusudan Dutta in an Anglo-Benglo-Assamese style, for such lines as "Kon siti basi chair āsane hastere likhani calāi yāi" etc. show a curious combination of the three languages, Assamese, Bengali and English; but all the same his poetic talent and power remain indisputable.

In spite of his defects, Bholānāth may rightly be styled as the Morning Star in the firmament of Modern Assamese literature. He may

be called the first writer of short poems as opposed to longer poems or epics of earlier style. Such poems of Bholānāth like "Kiayano nājāge āmār man" (why do not our minds awake?) and "Megh" (The cloud) really first bring the message of the new age. As regards his Anglo-Benglo-Assamese style, he did it under the notion, wrong as it was, that simple Assamese words would perhaps not be suitable for serious epics; and early education in the days of usurpation of Bengali, probably, induced him to write in such an artificial style. Though Ramakanta also imitated Madhusudan's blank verse sometime before him, he had a perfect assimilation of the influence, which Bholanath had not.

## VII. BUDDING OF THE PRESENT FORMS

RISE OF THE MODERN DRAMA is one of the important features of the period preceding the nineties of the nineteenth century. Hemcandra's serio-comedy *Kāniār Kīrttan* was no drama in a strict sense like Guṇābhīrām's social tragedy, *Rām-Navamā*. One Kefayatullāh is said to have written a farce during this period, as one Rudrarām Bardalai of Nagāo wrote one *Bangāl Bangālānī Natak*, and one Devanāth Bardalai of the same place issued two dramas *Hem Prabhā* and *Vaidehī-Vicched* about this time. Also Ratnadhar Baruwa (1864-94), Ghana-syām Baruwā (1867-1923), Ramākānta Barkākati (1860-1935) and Guṇjānan Baruwā (1860-1936) jointly rendered Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* into an Assamese drama, *Bhrama-Ranga*; in excellent national setting, and issued the same in 1888. Ramākānta's (1846-89) mythological drama *Sītā Haraṇ* also must have been issued about this time. Rajanikānta Bardalāi, Kanaklāl Baruwa and Gopāl Kṛṣṇa De are also known to have written one mythological drama about this time, but it is not traced.

BUDDING OF THE NOVEL, a gift of English literature undoubtedly, had its beginning during this period. The only novel, worth the name and published before the nineties of the nineteenth century, was *Sudharmār Upākhyān*, issued as early as 1884, by Padmāwati Phukanani (1853-1927), the eldest child and only daughter of Anandaram Dhekial Phukan. This is an interesting domestic novel like those of Jane Austen. Padmāwati also published, one *Hit-Sādhikā* and wrote many articles in local newspapers till the first quarter of the present century. Guṇābhīram's wife Viṣṇupriyā also issued one *Niti-Kathā* in 1884 and their daughter Svarṇalatā published one prose-work *Ārhi-Tiroṭā*. *Kāminīkānta* (1877) by G. S. Gurney dealing with characters of Chatterji-Banerji families can by no stretch of imagination be called an Assamese novel. Like Mrs. Mullen's *Phulmanī āru Karuṇā* it may be the Assamese rendering of a Bengali novel dealing with Bengali life with reference to Christianity.

PROGRESS OF JOURNALISM (Gait's *Report on the Progress of Historical Research in Assam*, Appendix IV giving "A Short Account of the Rise and Progress of Journalism in the Assam Valley, and Benudhar Rājkhawā's pamphlet in English to the effect) comes next. "The *Orunodoi*, a monthly paper, devoted to religion, science and general intelligence, is printed and published at Sibsagar Mission Press, by O. T. Cutter, for the American Baptist Mission in Assam." This was the description printed when the paper was first started in January, 1846. Cutter perhaps remained the editor till 1850 or Vol. V, and in 1851 Brown became the editor, from Vol. VI, and Cutter left Sibsagar in 1853. This year, from Vol. VII, A. H. Danforth becomes the editor, and in 1855 Brown left Sibsagar. From Vol. XI, 1856, S. M. Whiting became the editor. Then the following Missionaries became its editors in order: Bronson from 1865; Dr. & Mrs. Ward from 1867; Clarke from 1869; Rev. Gorney from 1874; Rev. & Mrs. Witter from 1884(?). *Orunodoi* continued till 1884 or 1882 while Mrs. S. R. Ward says, it was discontinued in 1880. It was illustrated from the Illustrated London News with blocks made by Assamese carpenters. It was priced Re. 1 per annum.

It was an inspiring ideal indeed, and it gave impetus to the birth of a galaxy of newspapers and magazines in Assam, both in English and Assamese. *Assam Vilāsinī* (1871-83) is the second Assamese monthly published from the Auniati Dharma Prakās Press. It was mainly a religious organ of the Satra, but it also ventilated public news and views. *Asam Mihir* (1872-73) is the third Assamese journal, and the first weekly in Assam published by the Gauhati Cidānanda Press. *Assam Darpan* (1874-75) in the next monthly in Assamese published from Viswanath in Tezpur and edited by Lakṣmī Kanta Barkakati. In the years 1875 and 1876 two other journals, one religious and the other literary and scientific made their appearance. Both these papers were edited from Nagāo and printed in Calcutta. 1876 saw another religious monthly organ published by the Nagāo Dihingia Gosāi from the Dharma Prakas Press at Gauhati. Other Journals are *Goālpārā Hitsādhinī*, (1876-78) a weekly; and *Candrodayā* and *Assam Dipak*, two monthly papers published by the Cidānanda Press and Dharma Prakās Press respectively from Gauhati.

The Assam News (1880-81), Anglo-Assamese Weekly, was edited by Hemcandra Baruwa and published from the Baruwā-Phukan Brothers and Co., Gauhati. It had a brilliant success and immense influence and had about nine hundred subscribers. It was however discontinued in the very year in which *Assam Bandhu* (1881-82) made its appearance, being edited by Guṇābhirām Baruwā. It was succeed-



ed by the publication of '*Mau*' edited by Harinārāyaṇ Baruwā in December, 1886, and *Asam Tarā* (1888-90) edited by Śrīdhara Baruwā of Auniāti Satra being published from Calcutta and Gauhati respectively. *Larā Bandhu* (1888), the first Assamese children's magazine, was edited by Karuṇābhiram, son of Guṇābhiram and published from Nagāo.

### VIII. PUBLICITY OF OLD ASAMĪYĀ CLASSICS

NEW EFFORTS to preserve the old manuscripts is another important feature of this period. It was a sympathetic movement induced by the efforts of the American Baptist Mission in this direction, or rather a continuation of it. For the first efforts for such collections of old manuscripts was inaugurated by Rev. Nathan Brown himself. He collected as many as forty manuscripts till 1850, among which are included the History edited by Kāsināth and Rādhānāth in 1844 and published by the Baptists, and the Chutiyā Chronicles issued in te *Orunodoi*. Then followed a period of more than sixty years during which no fresh efforts were seen till Sir Archdale Earle's regime that encouraged such endeavours.

It was Colonel P. R. T. Gurdon who employed Hemcandra Goswāmī who now collected as many as 77 Sanskrit and 156 Assamese manuscripts which latter included works on diverse topics as the following: (1) Proverbs 4, (2) Arithmetic 4, (3) Astronomy 1, (4) Biography 12, (5) Chronicles 10, (6) Drama 14, (7) Poetry 39, (8) Story 1, (9) Ahom dictionary 1, (10) Incantation and charms 1, (11) Medical treatises 2, (12) Miscellanies 2, (13) Mythologies 16, (14) Religious works 34, (15) Riddles 1, (16) Songs 4, (17) Tantra 1, giving the total of 156. It is needless to say that Brown did not perhaps care to collect religious manuscripts for obvious reasons. Besides, the public would not easily allow their religious works to be handled by all, far from allowing them to be printed, lest their sanctity should be spoiled and the dignity of the great Vaiṣṇavite writers should be slighted.

HARIBILAS AGARWALA (1842-1916) was the pioneer in non-official circles to serve the literature by issuing these old religious works. A Mārwarī by tradition, born in 1842 at Gamiri in Tezpur, was given the best early education that was possible at Dibrugarh and Sibsagar, and was then admitted into the Hindu School in Calcutta. Though he discontinued his academic life soon after, he travelled widely in all sacred places of India, Burma and Ceylon. He was a great business magnet and had business in large scale in Assam and in Calcutta where he had his own residence in the Armenian Street near Barbazar. He had five sons among whom was Candrakumar, the high priest of roman-

ticism in Assamese literature. Haribilas himself had some literary gift and wrote a short sketch on the life of Lambodar Bara and read it in a sitting of the Assamese Language Improving Society. He had business of Saw Mills, lac, elephant trapping, and tea-plantation, the last of which has its monument at Tāmōlbāri, a pioneer Tea-Estate of native planters. He died on the 18th November, 1916.

As early as 1876, Haribilās published the *Kērttan-Ghoṣā*, and then published the Tenth, Eleventh, and then again the First, Second and Third Books of the Bhāgawat by Śaṅkardew. He also published Śaṅkardew's *Guṇmālā*, *Sītā Svayambar Nāt*, *Bhatima*, *Bargīts* etc. before the close of the nineteenth century. He also published Purushottam Thakur's *Prayoga Ratnamālā Vyākaraṇ* in Sanskrit written in king Nara Nārāyaṇ's court. He also issued Mādhawdew's *Ratnāwali*, Daityari Thakur's *Guru Caritra*, and other works as *Ripunjay Smṛti* from the press, as also the Assamese version of *Sār Nitya Krīa* by Svami Siva Nārāyan Paramhansa. It is with the pecuniary help of Haribilas that Guṇābhīrām published his *Kāvya Kusum*, a selection of old Assamese poems. Thus Haribilās must be remembered at least as a great patron of Assamese literature.

MADHAW CANDRA BARDALAI (1846-1907), another patron like Haribalas, was born in January, 1846, to his father Kalpanāth and his mother Padmāwatī, at North Gauhati. He passed his Entrance Examination in 1864 with other great sons of Assam as Anandaram Baruwa, Colonel Jalnur Ahmed and Colonel Sivaram Bara. He passed his First Arts course duly, but having failed in the first chance in his B.A. Examination, he was reduced to the necessity of serving as a clerk at Nagāo and then at the Gauhati Steamer office. He then left his last job for a teachership in the Barisal High School and served there for three years. Thence he passed the Licenciante of Law Examination and joined the Gauhati Bar. He was soon recruited from it to be an Extra Assistant Commissioner whence he happened to top the list of Deputy Magistrates. He served for 27 years in the Provincial Civil Service, but died on the 10th October, 1907, before he could enjoy his well-earned pension for even two years.

Mādhaw Candra's monumental fame rests on his first publication of the Seven Kāndas of the Rāmāyaṇa by Mādhaw Kandali, Śaṅkardew and Madhawdew, his learned preface to it proving his scholarship. He also issued Puruṣottam Gajapati's Assamese version of *Dīpikā Canda* in 1895. Lakṣeśwar Sarmā was another young man who prepared to publish the whole of the Assamese Mahābhārat, but died a very early death.

INSTITUTIONAL EFFORTS are also another feature of this period. A notice in the *Orunodoi* (Vol. XIII) in 1858 shows the existence of one "Asam Deś Hitaisini Sabhā." It transpires that some Priyalal Baruwā and others established it on the 24th Agrahayan, 1777 Sak, or sometime about 10th December, 1855, with the avowed purpose of promoting welfare of the modern Assamese language and literature. Again, on the 25th August, 1888, (Bhādra, 1810 Sak) at 37, Mirijapur Street, was held the first sitting of the Assamese Language Improving Society, among the Assamese students of Calcutta, where they chalked out their programme. 'It shall be the endeavour of this Society to invite attention of the authorities of the Education Department of Assam to see that Assamese is actually employed in all grades of schools in Assam and that Assamese children have all facilities to study their own mother tongue; to remove all grammatical and orthographical anomalies and to use correct forms of speech instead; to move the authorities to use suitable works removing the defective ones;....to remove the wants of our language by translating from Sanskrit or other languages;....to promote interest for newspapers; and to create a standard language all through Assam". (*Jonāki*, Vol. I, No. 9, p. 211; *Āsām Tarā*, No. 8 Bahāg). This Society brought out a comprehensive catalogue of Assamese books in 1895.

## IX. THE MARVELLOUS "JONĀKĪ" PERIOD

ORUNODOI AND JONAKI mark different epochs in modern Assamese literature. They have something in common between the two, namely that though either cannot claim any comparison with the great glorious Vaiṣṇavite age, still in their own way *Orunodoi* and *Jonāki* practically were the organs of two movements, the former against the usurpation of Bengali, and the latter for the re-coronation of Assamese after her restoration. The Baptists laid the foundation of modern Assamese literature, and even the early modern trio Anandaram-Hemcandra-Guṇabhirām did little more than confirm the foundation; while the Romanticists represented by the next great trio Candrakumār-Lakṣmīnāth-Hemcandra, if they could not raise a palace tower on the foundation, had erected at least a decent building on it.

JONAKI the leading Assamese monthly of the period made its first appearance on the 9th February, 1889, published from Calcutta by its sole proprietor and editor Candra Kumār Āgarwālā. In the following years it was edited by Hemcandra Goswāmi and Lakṣmīnāth Bezbaruwā respectively. It was discontinued for some time and was again published from Gauhati by Kanaklāl Baruwā and Satyanāth Barā. *Bijuli* appeared in 1890 from Calcutta and was successively edited by Kṛṣṇa-

prasād Duwarā, Padmanāth Baruwā, Benudhar Rājkhawā, and by Lakṣmīnāth Sarmā, when it was published from Shillong; *Āsām*, another Anglo-Indian weekly founded by late Manik Candra Baruwā and edited by Kālirām Baruwā, appeared in September, 1894. It was followed on the 5th January, 1895, by the publication of the *Times of Assam*, an English weekly *Āsām Banti* is another Anglo-Assamese weekly published in January, 1899, from the Assam Central Press by some patriotic persons of Tezpur like Kamalākānta Bhattācārya and Jaydev Sarmā, and first edited by Mathurā Mohan Baruwā, and then by Jaydev Sarmā. *Eastern Herald* (1902-04) edited by Basambad Mitra, *Citizen* (1904-06) edited by Kālīnāth, *Chronicle* (1905) edited by Kṛṣṇa Candra Baruwā, are other newspapers published from Dibrugarh. *Dipti* (1905-07) by Baptists, was also published from Dibrugarh. *Advocate of Assam* (1905-12) also edited by Mathurā Mohan Baruwā from Gauhati, *Uṣā* (1907) by Padmanāth Baruwā, published from Tezpur, are periodicals issued before the second decade of the present century.

In Agrahāyaṇ, 1831 Śak (November, 1909) was issued *Bāhi* from Assam Bengal Stores in 2, Lal Bazar Street, Calcutta, edited by Lakṣmīnāth Bezbaruwā, with great promise and long life, following the creed of Jonākī; for it was the organ of the same school of writers including the editor. It was since published from Dibrugarh and then from Gauhati by Candrakumār Āgarwālā still with Lakṣmīnāth Bazbaruwā as its editor, till the middle of the thirties. It then passed into other hands before it discontinued. *Alocani* (1909-17) was another monthly journal published from Dibrugarh in Kārtika, 1831 Sak (October 1909) with editors as Prasannakumār Baruwā, Durgānāth Cāṅgākāti, and Nilamani Phukan successively. Other journals were *Asam Bāndhaw* (1910-16) edited by Tārānāth Cakravartī from Tezpur, *Kabitā-Latā* (1911-13), a quarterly edited by Nīlakaṇṭha Baruwā from North Lakhimpur, *Viśva-Bārttā* (1911), a weekly edited and published by Kālirām Dās from Dacca, *Assam Herald* (1912), a weekly edited by Kṛṣṇa Candra Baruwā from Nagāo, *Āsām Rāyat* (1912) edited by Bholānāth Gohāi from Dibrugarh, *Ranar Bātari* (1914) issued for sometime during the first great war, *Akan* (1916), a children's magazine beautifully illustrated and edited by Hemcandra Goswāmi and published by Lohit Candra Bhūyā from 43 Amherst Street, Calcutta, in January of 1916.

LATER JOURNALS. *Asāmñyā* made its appearance in 1918, first edited and published by Candrakumār Āgarwālā through Assam Printers and Publishers Ltd. as a weekly, and had a long vigorous life later as a daily Assamese national paper. A large number of journals and weeklies then follow: *Prabhāt* (?1920), *Islāmi Akhbar* (1919-20), *Cetanā*,

(1919-26), *Janmabhūmi* (1922), as the first quarterly organ of the Assam Students Conference, *Asam Pradipika* (1920), *Asam-Kriṣ* (1921), *Arghā* (February 1922), *Milan* (1922-23), the second quarterly organ of the Assam Students' Conference, *Bibār* (1923), an organ of the Baḍo community of lower Assam, *Sādhana* (1924-? 31), an organ of the Assam Muhammadan Students' Conference, *Asam Hitaisi* (1925-? 29) was issued from the Bhūdev Publishing House, Calcutta, first edited by Kamalākānta Bhattācārya. Other journals that followed are *Cotton College Magazine* (1924), *Economic Journal of Assam* (1925), *Jāgarāṇ* (1924-26); *Khetīyak* (1925); *Asam Sāhitya Sabhā Patrikā* (1925-44), *Arun* (1926-32), a children's magazine, and *Prabhātī* (1926) another organ of the Kacāri community of upper Assam; *Jananī* (1926), *Kārbār āru Kārbarī* (1926), *Paśu-Pālan* (1926-45), a journal on domestic animal welfare, *Jeuti* (1926-45), *Sewā* (1926), *Satyabādī* (1926), *International Times* (1927), *Prāntabāsī* (1927), *Santa Pradīp* (1928), *Pracārak* (1928), *Ghar Jeuti* (1928) the first organ of women in Assam, *Cotton Collegiate School Magazine* (1928), *Galpa-Series* (1929), *Bātari* (1929-37), begun as weekly and then conducted as daily, *Āwāhan* (1929-40), *Nagarar kathā*, *Asam* (July, 1935), *Swarāj*, *Pratibhā*, *Āsām-Sewak*, *Jayanti* and *Surabhi*, and *Manipur-Matam*, another Manipuri-Assamese paper published from Manipur.

MORE INSTITUTIONAL EFFORTS were even regular in this period. As early as the 2nd July, 1894, in response to Sir Gait's proposal and Sir William Ward's approval of it, the Government of Assam notified its intention to start the work of Assam Ethnography Department as a result of Risley's finds on the subject in regard to the races of Bengal. On the 18th July, 1894, Lyal, the officiating Chief Commissioner of Assam, further declared his intention to make a grant for the preservation of old manuscripts of Assamese religious works and chronicles, and accordingly Sir Gait made an allotment of Rs. 500 for the rest of the financial year 1894-95, and an annual allotment of Rs. 1,000 for three subsequent years. All the Deputy Commissioners were also instructed to help Sir Gait in this matter of collection. Sir Gait's famous work, "Report on the Progress of Historical Research in Assam", referred to so many times and oft, was the ripe fruit of his labours, which was submitted to the Chief Commissioner on the 23rd January, 1897, and was published the very year. The Report included a comprehensive list of published or unpublished Assamese books and books in various languages regarding Assam, and they were on different subjects as geography, geology, archaeology, history, religion, mythology, ethnography, philology, coins and miscellanies. It is difficult to exaggerate its importance.

Sir Gait collected various materials in this connexion among which were coins of the Ahom, Koch, Jayantiya, Tripura, Kachar, Manipur and other kings. He also gathered stone inscriptions, copper plates, inscriptions on cannon belonging to the pre-Ahom, Ahom, Koch, and Muhammadan periods. There were also chronicles in the Ahom and Assamese languages religious works, mythologies, stories and traditions, along with a catalogue of the archaeological remains of the country. Sir Gait was the first Honorary Director of this Department which position he retained till 1897, and then with the materials thus collected he issued his *History of Assam* to the world in 1905.

Sir Gait was succeeded by Colonel P. R. T. Gordon in 1897 as the Director of Assam Ethnography Department and he soon undertook the publication of the collected Assamese proverbs and then the editing and publication of Hemkoṣ, the first etymological Assamese dictionary that could be issued in 1900, with the help of his subordinate officer Hemcandra Goswāmī. Gordon also started the work of researches in regard to Assamese coins and true account of the Marāṇ, Khāmti and such tribes. In 1904, Sir Bamfield Fuller took over charge of this Department temporarily and began the publication of monographs on the hill tribes, and Gordon himself wrote an account of the Khāsis. It is under this Department that Hemcandra Goswami was deputed to collect Assamese Manuscripts to which we have already referred. His editing and publishing of *Asam Buranji* an old chronicle of Assam, of the *Darrang Rāj Vamsāwali* by Surjyakhari Daibajna and of the *Descriptive Catalogue of Assamese Manuscripts* are really the fruits of work of this Department.

In 1820, Col. Gordon was succeeded by Dr. Hutton as the Director of Assam Ethnography Department and he soon began deeper researches in the matter of the hill-tribes of Assam, and such publications as the following do great honour to the unique service rendered by this Department to the study of this subject in general. The publications include: *Monographs on the Hill Tribes of Assam*, *The Lakshers*, by N. E. Parry I.C.S.; *The Thadou Kukis* by William Shaw; *The Ao Nagas and The Lhota Nagas* by J. P. Mills, I.C.S.; *The Ao Naga Tribes of Assam* by W. C. Smith, M.A., Ph.D.; *The Sema Nagas and The Angami Nagas* by J. H. Hutton, C.I.E., M.A., I.C.S.; *The Kacharis* by Rev. S. Endle; *The Lushai Kuki Clans*, and *History of the Assam Rifles* by Lt. Col. Shakespeare; *The Mikirs* by Charles Lyall; *The Metheis* by T. C. Hodsom. *Manual of the Bengali Language* including an *Assamese Grammar* (1894) by G. F. Nichol, and *Assamese and Bengali* (1896) by J. D. Anderson, are works of the period from outside.

ASSAM RESEARCH SOCIETY was established on the 7th April, 1912, with Sir Archdale Earle, Maharaj Sir Jitendra Nārāyan Bhupa Bahadur of Kochbehar, Lieutenant Colonel P. R. T. Gordon, Sir Edward Gait and Raja Prabhat Chandra Baruwa Bahadur of Gauripur as its patrons. This Society was doing good work, on its own line that may, not unfittingly, compare with the works of other Research Societies in other provinces of India. The Journal of this Society first founded by Kanaklal Baruwā was a great asset to this Society publishing many valuable articles throwing a flood of light in the many dark corners of the history of the country.

ASSAM STUDENTS' CONFERENCE held its first sitting at Gauhati on the 25th December, 1916, presided over by Lakshminath Bezbaruwa. It has since had many eminent scholars like Col. Gordon, Dr. Bhān-dār-kār, Sir Prafullacandra Rai, C. F. Andrews, and Deva Prasād Sarvādhikāri, as its Presidents, and did lot to promote welfare of Assamese literature. The various *Sammilan Pravandhāwalīs*, the several publications of Hemcandra Baruwa Memorial Series, its journals as *Janma-bhūmi* and *Milan*, its awarding of Ānandarām Baruwā Gold Medal for any original paper on Sanskrit literature and, above all, its propagation of Assamese hero-worship, served to give a great awakening to the country. The institution still survives, but its present participation in active party-politics has led it away from its original line of action. Assam Muhammadan Students' Conference, also established some time after, with its organ, *Sādhanā*, contributed a good deal in its particular line to the improvement of Assamese literature.

ASSAM LITERARY ASSOCIATION held its first sitting at Sibsagar on the 26th December, 1917. The Association was doing many useful works including the publication of its journal and a Dictionary in 1933 through the Candrakanta-Indrakanta Trust Fund. *Dāmodar Carit*, and *Banamālī Carit*, *Satvata Tantra* are works published by the Sabhā through its Naradew Trust Fund; but the authenticity and correctness in editing of the first two works by its appointed editor were challenged by the Conference and ordered their proscription. Rewards were declared by the Conference for writing novels etc. and prizes were given for some life-sketches of eminent Assamese by the Kamala Devi Trust Fund of the Sabhā.

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORICAL AND ANTIQUARIAN STUDIES, ASSAM, was started in June, 1928 as the result of a proposal from Mr. Cunningham, the then Director of Public Instruction, Assam, moving the Government of Assam, for the establishment of such an institution, finally approved by Mr. Hammond, the then Governor Assam. Mr. Bentinck, the Commissioner of Assam was appointed the Provincial Director, and



Mr. Mills, the Deputy Commissioner of the Kachar district, and Professor Surjyakumar Bhuyan became Assistant Directors for the two Valleys. The publications of this department include *Asam Buranji* (1228-1826), *Kāmarūpar Buranji*; *Deodhai Asam Buranji*, *Asamar Padya Buranji*; *Tungkhungia Buranji* (1681-1806), *Kachārī Buranji*; *Jayantiya Buranji*; *Baharistan-i-Ghajbi*; *Tripura Buranji* (1710-15), and *Asam Buranji* (1848-81), *Ghorā-Nidān*, and *Kāmaratna Tantra*.

ASSAM MUSEUM. Along with these may also be counted such earlier efforts as the Candradhar Baruwā Trust Fund that contributed a great deal to promote welfare of Assamese literature. Late Candradhar, son of Haladhar Baruwā of Nagāo, an educated and promising young man, bachelor, who died, of black-water fever while for change at Madhupur, left Rs. 1,400 earmarked to be spent for encouragement of Assamese literature. Establishment of the Assam Museum and of the Pratibha-Devi Lectures in the last years of the thirties of this century are other important works of this period.

#### X. DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN ASAMĪYA PROSE

KAMALAKANTA BHATTACHARYA (1853-1936) was born at Na-duār Silbandhā at Tezpur, but they originally belonged to Garhehagā at Viswanāth in the same subdivision. He was attached to various business as elephant-catching of Haribilas Agarwala. He finally settled at Gauhati and had left his second wife, three sons and two daughters. Kamalākanta carried on literary culture for more than sixty years, right from the days of the *Orunodoi*, through the ages of *Asām-News*, *Asām Bandhu*, *Jonākōi*, *Bāhi*, *Asamiyā* till the day of the latest magazines in the thirties of the present century. He was one of the best original thinkers and writers of modern Assamese. He is rightly called a Mahārṣi for his foresight of a seer. He was a thoughtful writer both in prose and verse, and like Tennyson's poems, "Locksley Hall" and "Locksley Hall Sixty years after," most of the predictions of his early writings in regard to the future of Assam came true even in his later days.

In 1890 was published his collection of poems, *Cintānal* (The Fire of Thought), part one. Kamalākanta is nothing if he is not a patriot out and out; and he is first a patriot and then a poet or writer. He himself was conscious of his defects in regard to his poetic style and metre, but declared that he simply employed the poetic art to give vent to his patriotic feelings that were burning within him. But defects could appear only till he was not inspired; and they vanish the moment he had the "celestial fire" or divine wrath,

In the poems "Pūrṇimā Rātilai cāi" (Looking at the Full moon-lit Night), he begins:

Jonāk rātiṭi, rūpahī hāhiṭi, śuāi jagat, kino bitopan:  
Nicuk jagat, nidrār kolāt, kone mantra māti, harile cetan.

'Ah, the charming smile of the full moon-lit night! How beautifully it adorns the world! The world is lulled into the lap of Sleep. Who is it that has charmed and stolen away the consciousness of the world by uttering an incantation?' This is indeed beautiful and in some sense an original poetic expression. But he soon woke up from this mid-summer night's dream; for even then the miseries of his country once more became uppermost in his heart:

Pūrṇimār jonti, rūpahī hāhiṭi, eri hāt jorō karā palāyan:  
Tomār kiraṇ, nakare śobhon, durbhagā Asam pāpar badan.

'Oh charming smile of the Full-moon, do fly away, I beseech you with folded hands. Your rays do not so look well in the face of Assam, so wretched!' Similar thoughts are found in "Marisāli" (The Church-yard), "Jātiya Gaurav" (National Pride) and other poems.

The poem 'Pāharāṇi' (Oblivion) was written, on seeing an old rock-piece lying in front of the Tezpur court. He begins at once:

Koā Pāharāṇi, tomār petat, katano rākhichā buranji sumāi:  
Cintile ebār, marō puri dei, kata jāti kīrtti khālā gili hāi.

'Tell me, O Oblivion, how many chronicles have you devoured and put in your stomach? I die burning within myself, when I think how many glories of the nation you have devoured.' Then the poet looked this way and that, and heard a voice in the air which answered his queries:

Cintār nināde, śunilō idhvani, bindhile śokar jongāl śele:  
Prakṛtiye diā, deśar snehti, tej hai ghankai dhārere bale  
Cīārī kāndiche, śunā Brahmaput্রে, śilanī darāt nīrale bahi:  
Bilāpe inade, yei din dhari, Āryar gaurav paril khahi.

'I heard that voice resounded in my thought, and the sharp point of the spear pierced my heart; and thus it was that the love of my country which is nature's own gift, began to flow as blood thick and mobile. Hark ye! cries the Brahmaputra sitting over the yonder stones. This great river laments since the days the Aryan civilisation (in Assam) dropped down.' However the glimpse of bright future has not escaped his sight and he waits for the day:

Janmiba sidinā, śatek Metchini, tuccha pari thakā śilar parā:  
Śata Garibaldi, janam labhiba, kariba pohar Bhārat dharā.

'That day hundreds of Metcini will be born from such neglected and insignificant stones, and hundreds of Garibaldi will be born out of such stones and will illumine India and the world.'

The second part of *Cintānāl* was issued in 1922 and contains such patriotic poems as "Khasia Parvatat thit di manar bhab" and such poems as "Bāsantīr Biā" anticipating and giving the original idea of "Bahāgīr Biā" by Raghunath Chaudhari of much later days, for though presented in book form in the twenties of this century, these poems were first published in the eighties and nineties of the nineteenth century in the magazines *Assam-Bandhu*, *Jonāki* and others. His *Cintā Taranga* is another collection of his poems that was issued about the thirties of the present century. Kamalākānta certainly occupies a unique and high place in modern Assamese literature both in poetry and prose. Besides a large number of essays that overflowed the local magazines and his editorials in the *Assam-Hitaiṣī* he had left several big volumes of prose manuscripts like his *Aṣṭabakra* and his autobiography.

LAMBODAR BARA (1860-92), one of the great masters of modern Assamese prose, was born in 1860, at Thālipukhuriā village of Gamiri, Helem, in the Tezpur subdivision. He was the son of a poor but honest peasant. He was a writer in the periodical *Asam Bilāsinā* from the days he was a student of the Middle Vernacular standard. He wrote his schoolbook, *Larābodh*, after appearing in the B.A. examination, and rendered the Sanskrit drama *Sakuntalā* a year after, when he served as a Headmaster of the Kahima Middle English High School. He wrote his prose-work *Jñānoday* after passing the B.A. examination and becoming a practising lawyer. He was a regular contributor to all local magazines like *Jonāki*, *Asam Tarā*, *Assam News*. By early death in 1892, his other works as *Ānandarām Baruwār Jīwan carit*, *Samāj Darpaṇ Nātak*, *Īśvarachandra Vidyāsāgarar Jīwan Carit* and *Bhugol Vidyā* were left incomplete and were soon lost.

In the preface to his *Ānandarām Baruwār Jīwan Caritra*, he shows a Macaulian style, a thundering and rhetorical Assamese prose, an almost inimitable style in its own way. It begins: "Yetiā prāi goteikhan prthivī ajnān āndhārār kalā dhākaniye dhāki thāichil, yetiā prāi sakalo mānuhe ulanga veśe parvatar gātat bās kari hābir pahu āru gachar fal-mūl khāi jīwan dhāraṇ karichil, tetiāo ei puṇyābhūmi Bhāratbarṣa jñānar poharere bhotā tartār dare jiliki āchil." As a matter of fact, Lambodar is one of the few modern Assamese writers who have studied rhetorics or have attempted to write a careful and studied prose. Lambodar's style attained a large amount of dignity without being highly Sanskritic. Such prose-styles in any language are generally very attractive, but they seem to make room soon for more simple and practical style. The only junior writer who seems to have attempted an imitation of this style is Ānandacandra Āgarwālā who, by his wife Pārijāt Āgarwālā, is also related to Lambodar. Ānandacandra's

essay on Kṣamā (Forgiveness): "Kṣamā svargiya bastu. Kṣamā teja-svisakalar tej, tāpas sakalar Ved, satyaparāyaṇar satya. Kṣamā dayāmay pitār kanthamālā. Sakalo mānuh prakṛta kṣamāśil hoā hale ei saṃsār soṇar halheten; dukh-kūaliye āvari thakā ei prthivīt svargar jeuti parilheten." It has almost the rhythm of poetry.

The growth of satire, and wit and humour in modern Assamese had been accelerated by the essays of Hemcandra and Guṇābhiram. Hemcandra illustrated satire, and brutal satires too like Swift or Pope of English literature, in his *Bāhire Rang-Cang bhitare Koābhāturi*, and in his farcical play *Kāniār Kīrttan*. Guṇābhirām showed mere wit and humour in his work *Kathin Sabdar Rahasya Vyākhyā*, mild and kindly, even as the humour of Chaucer of English literature. Lambodar showed almost a compromise between the two, being less brutal in his caricature of the contemporary society, but all-the-same having a pointed reference to its vices, as in his essay "Sadānandar Kalāghumati (Sadānanda's Nap), published in the *Assam Bandhu* (Vol. I, No. 1).

SATYANATH BARA (1860-1925), another great master of modern Assamese prose, was born at Bharalumukh, Gauhati, the same year as Lambodar, and originally belonging to the same Tezpur subdivision, in the Herāpoā village of Naduar. Satyanath lost his father Dayānāth and his mother Amayā in his seventh and ninth year respectively. He was educated at school at Gauhati and at college in Calcutta with the pecuniary help rendered by his paternal uncle. He passed his Entrance, B.A. and B.L. final examinations in 1881, 1886 and 1889 respectively. Having lost a chance in the B.L. examination he served as the Headmaster of the Faridpur Hindu Academy. He died on the 13th December, 1925, leaving his widowed wife and two sons.

Satyanāth began his literary career long before he closed his academic life. He contributed excellent poems to *Asam Bandhu* or such local magazines and composed songs both serious and comic both in standard and in Kāmarūpī dialect. His *Gītāwalī* is the first book of modern Assamese songs issued in 1888. All the same, Satyanāth's fame now rests not on his poems, but on his prose works. His *Sāhitya Vicār* is the first contribution dealing with study of literature in outlines. His *Sārathi* is a collection of his essays on different subjects, written in a style of short, pregnant sentences, aphoristic and Baconian in form. "Vidyā mānav manar dipti," (Learning is the lamp of the human mind); "Puthir vidyā thupāi thoā dhanar nicinā" (Knowledge in books is like wealth accumulated); "Nyāyawanta mānuh tarjur nicinā" (A just man is like a true balance). The book is replete with such sentences. This is almost an inimitable style, finding a follower of late in Nilamañi Phukan's *Cintāmañi*.

Satyanāth's other useful works are *Ākās-Rahasya*, essays on Astro-nomical subjects, and *Cintā-kali*, essays on different thoughts expressed in the local magazines from time to time and now re-issued as a posthumous work. His *Kendra-Sabhā* is another posthumous work giving a collection of his humorous essays appearing earlier in local magazines. Satyanāth's *Bahal Vyākaran* is also a comprehensive work on the subject though not without defects. Any way, Satyanāth must live long in the memory of the posterity as a master of modern Assamese prose.

RATNESVAR MAHANTA (1864-93), another short-lived youth of genius and promise who died about the age of reaching his manhood like Ānandarām and Lambodar, was born to Thānesvar and Jayantī as their only son, and he lost his father who was the Satrādhikār of Baliāgaru Satra in North Lakhimpur, before he completed his first year. His widowed mother did all she could to bring up Ratnesvar who at last passed the Entrance Examination from the Gauhati High School. His academic career was put a stop to at this stage and he now came to Purani Gudām, Nagão, to live under the wings of his maternal uncle. Here he married and became an accountant in the Nagão court as encouraged by Guṇābhirām Baruwā, then an Extra Assistant Commissioner at Nagão. Unfortunately Ratnesvar's life was cut short by death which came with the black-water fever that attacked him in 1893. Ratnesvar had a promising literary career and was regular contributor to *Asam-Bandhu*, *Jonākī* and such other journals. His historical contributions as in "Princess Jaymati" were leading research articles on such subjects. His only work that appeared is his *Kavitā Hār*, is a collection of his poems, which proves his poetic genius. His other works, a drama on *Draupadīr Beni Bandhan* and the second part of his *Kavitā Hār*, remained incomplete and unpublished. Ratnesvar also wrote many articles under the pseudo-name Ramdās Gosvāmi.

## XI. THE THEATRE OF ASSAMESE ROMANTICISM

A TRIO OF ROMANTIC PRIESTS. The period, familiarly known as the Age of *Jonākī* (glow-worm) after the name of the monthly magazine, published in 1889, is the epoch referred to as the age of Romanticism in Assamese literature. True it is that direct or indirect influence of English literature was already felt about the seventies of the last century in the introduction of lyrical poems and in the use of blank-verse in epic poems, but they were more concerned with the form than with the spirit of the English literature. Modernism of course touched them, and poets like Bholānāth, Ramākānta and Kamalākānta are modern, as are Madhusudan and Bankimcandra of Bengali literature, because of

this touch; while poets like Viśveśvar, Dutirām and Pūrṇakānta are not so, like Bhāratchandra, Īśwar Gupta and Dīnabandhu of Bengali literature, because of the lack of it.

CANDRAKUMAR (1867-1938), Lakṣmīnāth (1868-1938) and Hemcandra (1872-1928) by themselves form a trio of modern Assamese literature even from their university life, when they first published *Jonākī* in 1889. They may aptly be compared with the Lake Poets of English romanticism. Candrakumār, the real founder of *Jonākī*, and rather the leader among them in all points, played the most prominent part and contributed the most important elements of romanticism through his poems. But like poet Gray of English literature, few Assamese poets have climbed the Parnassus with so little bag and baggage. Almost all his poetical efforts are covered by these two little volumes, *Pratimā* (The Image) and *Bīn Barāgi* (Thy Lyric Ascetic) since published in the first and third decades of the present century. Firstly, his language and style are always extremely simple, natural and colloquial, showing a vast contrast to the Sanskritic, artificial and rather bombastic style of his predecessors like Bholānāth. It is purely Wordsworthian. Secondly, his subjects dealt more directly with nature, and not merely "as a background to the picture of human life", as it has never been dealt before. His poems like "Niyar" (The Dewdrops), "Fulā Sariyah Darā" (The blossoming mustar-seed-plants) are full of the freshness of nature, not seen through books, and are of exquisite beauty.

Thirdly, the subject of Man (independent of nationality and class) also began to occupy more space in his poetry and it sheds new lustre over it in his poems like "Visva Bhāwariā" (The Universal Actor), "Mānav-Bandanā" (Adoration of Man). In the English Romantic Movement, Wordsworth was supplemented by Coleridge who wrote about the supernatural. We find this as the fourth element in Candrakumār in such poems as "Ban Kūwari" (Wood-nymphs) and *Jal Kūwari* (Mermaid). The fifth and sixth elements, namely, a deep feeling for the lives of the poor, and a new form of poetry, like Scottish poetry, anticipating the ballad, are amply illustrated by Candrakumār's *Bīn-Barāgi*-poems and the poems like "Tezimalā". Lakṣmīnāth's main contribution to Assamese Romanticism is the popularizing of ballad-poetry through a large number of poems like "Dhanbar āru Ratani", *Mālati*, "Badan." Hemcandra wrote the first Assamese sonnet, perfect in octave and sestet, and many other beautiful poems. The former's *Kadamkali* and the latter's *Fular Cāki*, published about the second decade of the present century, are small collections of their poems scattered in old magazines.

Like the English, the Assamese Romantic Movement also expressed itself in various other channels besides poetry. Lakṣmī Nāth's farcial dramas, *Litikāi*, *Nomal*, *Cikarapati-Nikarpati*, as also Padmanāth's *Teton Tāmuly*, *Gāoburhā*, prove this tendency in drama. Rajanikanta's *Miri Jiarī* is an excellent example of Romanticism in the department of novel. Poems of Ānandacandra, Benudhar, Padmanāth, Candradhar, Raghunāth, Durgeswar also have some traits of this Romantic movement in common heritage. The seventh element, the passionate treatment of personal love that was on the whole absent from English poetry since the Restoration and was restored by Robert Burns, is best seen in Candrakumār's poem *Mādhuri* (Sweetness) and *Sudhāmukh* (the ambrosial face), and Lakṣmīnāth's *Bhram* (Erring), *Priyatamār Saundaryya* (Love's Beauty). In Hemcandra's *Priyatamār Cithi* (Letter from the Beloved), *Kāko Āru Hiyā Nibilāo* (No more shall I give my heart to anyone), Ānandacandra's *Tai* (Thou), and so forth, this element has been most prominent, as among other pro-Jonākī poets. The Jonākī Age or the Romantic period of the literature actually stops in the third decade of the present century; but its influence is still felt. The luminaries that shone in that moon-lit festival have been setting now one by one, but it seems there is yet sometime before we come to any well-defined new period.

CANDRAKUMAR AGARWALA (1867-1938) was born on the 28th November in a place called Brahmajān in the Kalangpur Mauzā of the Tezpur sub-division as the second son of Haribilās Āgarwālā (1842-1916) who had several qualities of head and heart to transmit to his worthy son. Born of a Mārwarī father and an Assamese mother in Tezpur, Haribilās naturally inherited the business head of a Mārāwārī from one parent and genuine love for Assamese mother tongue, from his other parent. For his education Haribilās migrated to Dibrugarh and then to Sibsagar and lastly to Calcutta, where he was admitted to the Hindu School. He read there for sometime and then started some business. It is from this his business quarters in 10 Armenian Street, Calcutta, that Candrakumār first prosecuted his college studies and helped his father in business. He was admitted into the Calcutta Presidency College where he had Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Dass as one of his college friends.

Of keen intellect and independent nature Candrakumār was a bit too shy and of a true poetical temperament, which qualities he retained till his old age. After he passed his First Arts Examination he was ready to have his education in England, but his father, though at first inclined, later on refused to send him to England on orthodox grounds, and therefore got him admitted into the B.A. class at Calcutta. Frustrated



trated in his ambition, Candrakumār was almost determined not to be graduated from an Indian University with the result that he buried his mind in activities other than his studies and returned to Asam without a Degree. He took to tea-plantation business mainly, where he was a grand success and on this rested his other activities connected with Assamese literature.

In his remeniscences, Lakṣmīnāth Bezbaruwā writes—'Candrakumar Agarwala was then possibly in the Second Year Class of the Presidency College, Calcutta... His smiling face, his sweet words and his charming demeanour attracted me towards him from the very day we first met. There was no delay in friendship being established between us. He was literarily inclined, and so was I. He consulted with us to bring out an Assamese monthly magazine, *Jonākī*. I encouraged him to the utmost and was ready to write articles for it. So had *Jonākī* seen the light of day about January, 1889. "A subject nation has no politics" is a memorable utterance of Sir Ashutosh Caudhāri Bar-at-Law and Judge of the Calcutta High Court; but almost the same dictum found place in the *Ourselves* (Ātmakathā) of this student-editor of *Jonākī* long before it found expression in the speech of that veteran politician. Indeed this very excellent editorial of Candrakumār had the promise of a masterly Assamese prose writer, and his beautiful poem *Ban-Kūwari* (The Wood-Nymph) held the promise of an original poetic genius in Assamese, besides bringing home the fact to many readers, perhaps for the first time, that poems suitable to the modern age could thus be clad in naked or simple Assamese. "Niyar" (The Dewdrops) was another little poem of exquisite beauty published in this volume of *Jonākī*.'

Such beautiful poems published in this magazine founded and edited by him, as also in the *Bāhi* subsequently founded and edited Lakshmināth Bezbaruwā, were included in his first poetical work *Pratimā* (The Image) published in 1913; and his *Bīṇ Barāgi* and other poems appearing later on in the *Bāhi* were collected and published in his second and last volume of poems *Bīṇ Barāgi* (The Lyric Ascetic) published in 1923. Candrakumār's literary life looks rather indirect and by-the-way. He rather preferred to prepare the back-ground and be in it, as he did with *Jonākī* in 1889, and with *Asamiyā* (The Assamese), the first regular, and long-standing weekly (later on converted to a bi-weekly and daily) published in 1918. He also financed *Bāhi* published from Assam since 1920.

TO EXTERNAL APPEARANCE, Candrakumār seemed a bundle of contradictions in his daily life, as William Morris (1834-96) of English

literature: "The savour of the man's personality lay in the juxtaposition of these two divergent qualities, poetic imagination and practical sagacity. On the one side an artist, a lover of the beautiful, a Utopian visionary; on the other a man of shrewd common sense, direct, blunt and downright. His dreams were no castles in the air, they had a definite ground plan. The dreamer devised beautiful things, beautiful poems, beautiful prose, beautiful handicrafts; the practical man expressed them in terms of utility. He loved beauty so well that he turned it into a limited company." A man of middle stature, he was not apparently very robust but indeed very smart and active which quality also he retained till the last, his extremely quick and keen intelligence being manifest in his sparkling eyes and penetrating look. His exquisitely lovable heart was revealed in the sincerity and warmth of his behaviour. He became a full-fledged *khaddarite*, initiated of late to the Gandhian faith by a direct touch of that magnetic personality; for Mahātmā Gandhi happened to be a guest in his house during his first visit to Dibrugarh, the memory of which is cherished in his beautiful poem "Mahātmā" appearing as the first poem of his *Bīn Barāgi*. A prominent member of an aristocratic family and a leading tea-planter himself, he was rather Anglicised in his habits till 1921; but once converted he remained true to his new faith, in and out, for the rest of his life.

Even in his old age he remained "a shy, sweet soul". As a man of business he seemed too strict and never spared any body and least of all himself; but in personal relations he was like the hero of Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World* extremely generous even if in spite of himself. He had the same good sense and geniality as Sir Walter Scott whose daughter, upon some one asking if she read the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, gave the unexpected reply: "No, Papa says there is nothing so bad for young people as reading bad poetry." Upon appearing the first appreciation of his *Pratimā* in the *Bāhi*, he once said disparagingly of himself to the writer, 'What is there in my poems? With yourself and two more I find only three souls admiring my poems'. But fortunately now there must at least be three hundred if not more, who read his poems with sincere admiration.

AN EPOCH MAKER. With the advent of *Jonākī* in 1889 comes the Age of Romanticism in Assamese literature as an echo of English Romanticism, and Candrakumar was undoubtedly the immediate high priest of this new movement. "Where Wordsworth spiritualises, and Shelley intellectualises Nature, Keats is content to express her through the senses." In his first few poems appearing in the first volume of *Jonākī*, namely Ban Kūwarī (The Wood-Nymph), Jal-Kūwarī (The

Mermaid), Niyar (The Dew-Drops), his spiritualisation and worship of Nature is apparent; and in such poems as Prakṛti (Nature) one finds intellectualisation of Nature like Shelley. He is not concerned in such poems as the last, in mere depicting Nature but would also explain her; and would readily move from the external fact to the inner idea. Hence like Wordsworth and Shelley, Candrakumār is not only a poet of Nature, but is also a prophet of Nature. "Keats had no religion save the religion of beauty." In Candrakumār also we find this whole-hearted beauty-worship, as is clearly evidenced by such poems as Sundar (The beautiful) and Saundarya (Beauty) where he frankly admits: 'Worship of the Beautiful is the play of life'. Candrakumār also showed the paganism of Keats in such exquisite poems as Mādhurī (Sweetness), Kisorī (The maiden). Here is the beautiful little poem 'Niyar' (The Dewdrop):

Mukutā maṇiti, pāhit jilike, phatik pānīt dhowā:  
 Nisār tarā eti, sariyehe āche, saragat topani yoā.  
 Nizam ākāsar, nicuk kathāti, hiāt thaiche sāci:  
 Kon kāhānir, sapon dekhiche, kone hāhichil nāci.  
 Fulanīt kone, nisā nācichil, chigi rai gal maṇi:  
 Rangilīr bhāv, hāhi nāconar, ral cin eikaṇi.  
 Rātīr dhemālī, jonar nifut, hāhire thaiche sāni:  
 Puār henguli, belitilāi cāi etupī cakur pānī.  
 Niyar kalire, śobhe ful jupī, cāichō bhāvate bhāhi:  
 Hāi ki biṣam pelālī bāyuwe, jokāri fular pāhi.

'There glitters the small bead of pearl, washed in the crystal water. Nay, it is a star of night that slept in the heaven and dropped down: it stores in its heart the silent message of the mute heaven; and he now dreams of the far off days and draws the mental picture of one who danced and smiled. Nay, who is she that danced in the flower-garden at night, the trace of which fact is left in this bead of pearl separated from her ornament?—And this is the little memento left of the jolly girl's mood of smile and dance. Then play of night is kept here mixed with the silent smile of the moon. Or is it a drop of tear shed by looking at the rising sun of vermilion colour? I looked engrossed in thought at the flower plant adorned with buds of morning dew; but alas! the wind has undone it by shaking it off from the flower plant.'

The poem Mādhurī (Sweetness) may be noted simply for the fine music of its verse and the to and fro movement of its rhythm:

Fulō ne nufolōkai  
 Othat lājere rai  
 Sāmari pāhari gai  
 Udangāi dhāki thai  
 Solakāi mokālāi  
 Hay ne nahaykai

kumaliā kaliti:  
 micikiā hāhiti.  
 meli ādhā prāṇti:  
 uthi āhā bukuti.  
 ādhā bandhā khopāti:  
 ādhā futā māt ti.

Suno ki nuśuno ai	uti ahā gīt ti:
Riṇiki riṇiki kai	karabār bāhiti.
Ucupi nicuki gai	khantekiā thehti:
Lukuā bhumukā kai	chayā-mayā pecti.
Hāhōwei ne kāndokai	calcaliā cakuti:
Dhemāli khangar nai	mithā gāthi thopāti.
Olāo nolāo kai	manamohā thagti:
'Na yayau na tasthau"	agā-pichā bhariti.
Sān-mihalir nai	obhatani sōt ti:
Sāthar bhāgani hai	pānī mithai got ti.
Cāo ne nācāo kai	maramar dehīti:
Devī ne mānavī ai	Mādhurir chabiti.

The picture of an almost-blossoming maiden in colloquial and idiomatic Assamese in a metre, almost heaving itself, appears untranslatable.

THE HUMANITARIAN note in Candrakumār is even more prominent. Here again his poem Mānav Bandanā (Man-worship):

Ahiche mānuh, gaiche mānuh, mānuh mayāpī jīwa:  
 Mānuh sotar, anta nāikiā, bulile marat kiya.  
 Mānavī janam, diā utuāi, mānavī karam sote:  
 Mānuhar maram, bujibā mānuhe, dharam ye maramate.  
 Mānuhei lag, mānuhei saṅg, mānuhei parātpar:  
 Ei ye prthivī, svargato adhik, mānuhar nijāpī ghar.  
 Mānuhei dew, mānuhei sew, mānuh bine nāi kew:  
 Karā karā pūjā pādya-arghā lai, jay jay mānav dew.

'Man comes and man goes, and man is a supernnnatural being. The current of man knows no end, but it has been called a mortal's land, and why? O, let your human life flow away in the current of humanitarian deeds. Appreciate, ye men, the love of your brother men; (for) religion consists in kindness. Man is your companion, man is your fellow-creature, man is the Supreme Being. The Earth we pace is more glorious than heaven, and it is man's own abode. Man is God, man is worthy of adoration; there is none else than man. Then do worship man with the usual rites and ceremonies, (and sing) glory of god in man."

This very idea is re-iterated in his *Bīṇ Barāgī* later:

Dekhichō prthivī, svargato adhik, mānuhar nijāpī ghar:  
 Mānuhei dewa, iha jagatar, mānuhei parātpar.  
 Mānuhar prīti, sādhibalai coā, viśva jagat kalpanā:  
 Āl dharaibalai, sahasra pradīp, āratir dhūp-dhunā.  
 Fal ful jal, candan-bhuṣaṇ, malayār śītali bā:  
 Mānuh santos, hak buli coā, āche lāge yata yibā.  
 Hāhiche mānuh, kāndiche mānuh, pātiche mānuhe prem:  
 Dhūlite uday, dhūlite bilay, dhūlio svargīya hem.

These lines more than approach the sublimity of Candidās:

"Listen, brother men,  
 Man is the highest Truth.  
 None is higher than he."

**THE REVOLUTIONIST.** Combined with Candrakumār the humanitarian is found Candra Kumār the revolutionist. He was never a "crowd-worshipper" and though so genuinely interested in man, even as Milton "he was like a star and dwelt apart," and "far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife". He had a Shelleyan thirst for freedom and a Shelleyan hatred for all external restraints of society. But license was not his idea of liberty; it was to "rule the Empire of Self", not by brute-force but by soul-force, which is Love. He condemns brute-force and inequalities in society, and bursts into such strain in his *Bīṇ Barāṅī*:

Ānguli bulāba, janā hale āji, pelālōheten tāni:  
 Himālay cūrhā, burālōheten, uchāli kaliā pānī.  
 Ākāsar tarā, numālōheten, thapiāi lākhe lākhe:  
 Jon beli grah, pelālōheten, daliāi jāke jāke.  
 Pāpar majiā, namālōheten, aṭhāi sāgarar tal:  
 Brahmāṇḍar cin, thākilheten, māthō samudrar jal.  
 Mān-apamān, dhauwāi jāk, prthivīr parā guci:  
 Natun sṛṣṭr, aruṇ kīraṇe, karok sakalo śuci.  
 Śok lāj bhay, nāthākiba āru, natun jagat sito:  
 Herōā bīṇar, ānandar sur, bājiba dinare dinto.

"Did I but know how to move my fingers, would I pull down and drown the Himalayan peak. I would snatch down the heavenly bodies by lacs and would throw away the moon and sun and planets by crowds. I would push down this Earth, full of sins, to the bottom of the unfathomed sea; the water of which would alone be a proof of this universe. Let respect and disrespect be washed away from the shores of the earth, and let the dawning of new creation purify every thing with its new golden light. Sorrow, disgrace and fear will then all depart, for it will be a new universe altogether where the tune of joy awaking from the lost lyre (of love) shall be ringing all day long."

Unlike the mass of modern Assamese poems, Candrakumār's poetry is not a colourless thing. It is coloured by his individuality and is eloquent by the message he gives. It is a message of love and democracy. Though this democratic note is not inaudible in his *Pratimā*, it is surely eloquent in his *Bīṇ Barāṅī*. The Lyric Ascetic, who is surely the poet himself, addresses his Lyre which symbolises his muse, and relates his own experiences like Goldsmith's *Traveller*. It is a tale of woe and of oppressions of the poor, memory of which makes his heart break. He sees how "friends cook the flesh of friend and feast on them," and how "friends light their lamps with the blood of their friend men, to make their floors glitter". He shows that the royal road to happiness is not that way, but it lies through harmony in man, through love or kindness which is religion in fact.

**THE METAPHYSICAL POET.** Like some of the poets of the school of Donne (1537-1731) of the Elizabethan period of English literature, Candrakumar wrote a large number of highly reflective poems on something like spiritual or philosophic subjects as Viṣṇu Bhāwariā (The player in Theatre of the Universe), Mai (The Self) in *Pratimā*, and in many of the *Bīṇ Barāṅī* poems; but naturally he exhibits his excellent "power of fusing metaphysical thought with lyric feeling", as may be seen from the single instance of the beautiful little poem "Mai":

Samsār morei pūrṇa dekhō:	Mai Mai Mai mātra bipul samsāre,
Achō mātḥō niranjan Mai	Mai Mai Mai sure śunā
Nāi tumi keō āru nāi,	Bājiche prāṇar bīṇā tān,
Pārā yadi hoā mote lay.	Mai binā āche no ki guṇā.

"I see the world full of Me. It is only the spotless Me that lives. No Thee and none else than Me exist. If you can, then do merge in Me. This vast universe is nothing but Me, Me, Me. Hark! the lyre of life is awake with the tune Me. Think what else is there than Me."

In common with all metaphysical poets, Candrakumār's verses sometimes seem to suffer from obscurity of thought and at other times in his anxiety to pour out his message, he sometimes stammers with his verses. Indeed, poems of both Candrakumār and Lakṣmīnāth suffer not infrequently from defective rhyming, partly because they paid little attention to the prosody, and partly due to the fact that they shaped their verses after indigenous Assamese ballads the rhyming of which depended mainly on accent. But whenever they were inspired they were sufficiently eloquent and their verses were mobile enough to sweep away anything that stood in the way.

**LAKSHMINATH BEZBARUWA (1868-1938).** It was in the clear full moon light of November, the sacred night when goddess of wealth is worshipped, that Lakṣmīnāth, the fifth son of the nineteen children, by his two wives, was born to Dīnanāth Bezbaruwā, on the sands of the mighty Brahmaputra. It happened to be so on the occasion of the transfer of the father, an Extra Assistant Commissioner, from Nagāo to Barpetā, moving by a country boat since steamers or trains were not known in Assam in those days. The place where the boat was anchored for the night was known as Ahatguri in between the two places.

In his *Reminiscences*, Lakṣmīnāth, in his usual humorous style, describes his early impressions of Barpetā, Tezpur, Lakhimpur and Gauhati towns to which his father was successively transferred, and also gives a vivid description of their romantic journeys by boat on the Brahmaputra. Dīnanāth Bezbaruwā retired from Government

service in 1873 and came to settle in his old home at Sibsagar where Lakṣmīnāth was admitted first into the Vernacular and then into the Government High English School. He narrates how he disliked the dry and rigorous school discipline and the dusky atmosphere within its four walls, and he hardly claims anything above mediocrity in his studies. He passed the Entrance Examination in 1886 with a scholarship of Rs. 20 per mensem to prosecute higher studies in Calcutta. He got himself admitted first into the Ripon College and then took a transfer to and passed the First Arts Examination from the City College. In due course he graduated himself from Calcutta and attached himself to the Post-Graduate English and Law classes, and secured no Degree from either. He was the leader of the band of Law students of Calcutta who filed a suit of compensation against the Calcutta University for setting questions outside the syllabus in the final examinations and for being responsible for the failure of so many would-be lawyers of that year.

To apply the heredity-education-environment formula to the life of Lakṣmīnāth Bezbaruwā, first of all, one sees how heredity determines his literary career. His mother, the second wife of Dīnanāth Bezbaruwā (1813-95) came of the illustrious family of the great Vaiṣṇava poet of the fifteenth century, Ananta Kandali; and his father, the head-Physician of the last Ahom king Purandar Siṃha, was a literary man. Regarding education and environment, Lakṣmīnāth got the best of each, unquestionably, under the circumstances. Born and brought up in an orthodox Hindu family of old, he was truly cultured in the oriental way; and he received his higher education and post-Graduate training in the city of Calcutta. In 1891 he married Prajñā Sundarī Devī, an own niece of the world-poet Rabindranath Tagore, thus gaining for himself a most cultured atmosphere again. True, as it may seem, that his timber business was hardly in keeping with his literary life, one may see that he created his own atmosphere even then, living at Howrah and Sambalpur where he carried on his business.

**EARLIER WORKS.** His literary genius first appears as a University student towards the later eighties of the last century, when he was residing in a Mess in 53 College Street, Calcutta. It was kindled by his friendship, which became so intimate and life-long, with Candrakumār Āgarwālā who was then a First Arts student living with his father in 10, Armenian Street, Calcutta. This their historic first acquaintance was soon followed by the inception of the high-famed Assamese monthly *Jonākī* about January, 1889, under three-fold responsibility, Editor, Manager and Proprietor, of Candrakumār. With this first issue of *Jonākī* begins the splendid literary career of Lakṣmī-



nāth and with nothing less than his famous farce *Litikāi* which was completed in twelve issues, the year round. In his *Reminiscences*, the author says that for his shyness to emerge into lime light of a writer, he wrote the farce secretly on the benches of the Eden Garden, Calcutta, with pencil and on very thin paper, and without making any fair copy of it handed over the copies in instalments to his editor-friend who accepted them gladly even though his editorial rules were apparently violated. It was a tremendous success, and the readers of *Jonākī* hailed Lakṣmināth for all his future promises. *Litikāi* (The Pages) was reprinted in book form about 1890.

*Padum Kūwarī* (The Lotus Queen), a novel, his second work which saw the light of day, in a book form, in 1905, also owes its origin to the same magazine *Jonākī*, in its third volume, now edited by Lakṣmināth Bezbaruwā himself. This novel written in connection with the historical event *Dandūā Droh* or the Rebellion of Haradatta and Viradatta of Kāmrūp, and on the same theme in which Rajanikanta later wrote another novel. Lakṣmināth's style was outstanding, and predicted a masterly writer. *Kṛpābar Baruwār Kākatar Topolā*, Assamese *Pickwick Papers*, appeared in a book form in 1904, and as in the case of Charles Dickens (1812-1870) brought the writer immense fame. But for this too the second volume of *Jonākī* was the first cradle, the magazine being now published from 2, Bhavanicaran Dutta's Lane, Calcutta, where Candrakumār came to reside in a Mess with Lakṣmināth Bezbaruwā and Hemcandra Goswāmī thus forming a Trinity of Assamese Romantic Movement like the three Lake poets of England.

His essays like *Kāmat Kṛititwa Labhibar Sanket* (How to win success in work), *Dīnanāth Bezbaruwār Jīwanī* (the life-sketch of Dīnanāth Bezbaruwā), *Bākhar* (The Gem, character) appear as booklets in 1903, 1909 and 1914 respectively. His *Bhāratvarsar Burañjī* (History of India) and *Bhāgawat Kathā* (Talk about the Bhāgawat), written after Marsden and Kṣitindranāth Thakur respectively, the former published about 1910 and the latter in 1915, were meant for instruction of children. His *Junukā* in prose and verse, *Burhī Air Sādhu* (Grand-Mothers' Tales) and *Kakādeutā Aru Nātilarā* (Grand-father and grandson) published in 1910, 1911 and 1912 respectively are Assamese folk-tales written in a very interesting style for young children. He also wrote and published *Śaṅkardew*, his life and brief review of a few of his works, and *Mahāpuruṣ Śrī Śaṅkardew Aru Śrī Mādhaw-dew*, their life and works, in 1911 and 1914 respectively, thus rendering a great service to the cause of Assamese Vaiṣṇavite literature, it being Lakṣmināth who first unlocked its door.

AN ASSAMESE DICKENS. *Kṛpābar Baruwār Obhotani*, the second instalment of Assamese *Pickwick Papers*, was published in 1909, and the worthy followers of his farce *Litikāi* (The Pages), *Nomal*, *Pācani* and *Cikarpati Nikarpati*, all appeared in the year 1913. All these farces are based on popular traditions or folk-tales and very elegantly written. Along with these, he also wrote short stories the first of which appeared in the *Jonākī*, later. So his short-stories in *Surabhi*, *Sādhū Kathār Kuki*, *Jonbiri*, appeared in 1909, 1912 and 1913 respectively.

*Bāhī*, the illustrious monthly magazine edited by Lakṣmīnāth Bezbaruwā for nearly a quarter century was first published from 2, Lal Bazar Street, Calcutta. Like *Jonnākī*, which it really represented, it was an immense success and fared modern Assamese literature a long way in paths of progress. Lakṣmīnāth published his collection of beautiful poems, comic and serious, *Kadam Kali*, in 1913, and his historical dramas *Cakradhwaj Singha*, *Jaymatī Kūwarī* and *Belimār* (The Sunset), were published about the year 1915. Whether or not his dramas are things of beauty for the footlight, they are undoubtedly great contributions to dramatic literature. Besides his creations of some beautiful imaginary characters, all his dramas abound in scenes of high excellence and are replete with songs which know no parallel in their poetic grandeur and majesty and must be long cherished as "joy forever."

As in his poems and songs, sometimes in prose and also in a few character-sketches such as his Pijau Gābharu in *Belimār*, Dālimi in *Jaymatī Kuwarī*, he betrays a poetic genius of high order. His Dālimi, like Dwijendralāl's Mānasī in *Mevār Patan*, appears truly "a dream of bliss" to use the term of his hero. But in these character-sketches as well as in some of his songs and poems one may detect him borrowing thoughts, ideas or lines from Sanskrit or English. His character of Dālimi, for example, appears by the name Jinu in another drama of the same name by Padmanāth Baruwā and of the same historical event published a few years before him; and a character even exactly of the same name and situation, though both are imaginary, appears in the first Assamese romantic novel *Miri Jīyari* by Rajanikānta Bardalai published more than a dozen years before him. Can this be ascribed to Lakṣmīnāth's lack of gift of original genius? To quote Emerson's words in regard to Chaucer: "It has come to be practically a sort of rule in literature, that a man, having once shown himself capable of original writing, is entitled therefore to steal from the writings of others at discretion. Thought is the property of him who can adequately place it. A certain awkwardness marks the use of borrowed

thoughts; but as soon as we have learned what to do with them, they become our own."

**A POET INSPITE OF HIMSELF.** Like George Bernard Shaw Lakṣmī-nāth seemed shocked to hear one calling him a poet. Nevertheless he was a poet in truth and is responsible for many exquisitely beautiful poems and superb songs. Unfortunately he did not take the art of poetry seriously and liked rather to appear as an amateur in the art; but all the same, his Barāgi Āru Bīp (later named Bīp Barāgi), Priyatamār Saundarya, Bhram (Error) and a dozen like them are among the best poems in modern Assamese. Here is his poem "Bhram" (Erring):

Kone kale seyā, bāhī bāje buli? Vandevī gīt gāy:  
Sewālir mālā, nahay ei dhār, tarāre gūthiche hāy.  
Nahay fulanī, kūwarisakal, darhāi darhāi kāo:  
Golāp nahay, priyār nayan, dekhi thar hai rāo.  
Kone kay siti, harinā poāli? Imān cetanā nāi:  
Vanar saundarja, rūp dhari āhi, deo di dubari khāy.  
Nahay pukhuri, premikār hiā: pānī nahay prem-ras:  
Nai nahay, thik premar pravāh, bicāri prem vivas.  
Bīṇar ātmāti, uri guṇ gāy, koneno bhomorā bole:  
Khopār fulti uriye priyār, pakhlār nām pāle.  
Kṛṣṇa pakhi kaichā, pātar mājat, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa dāk diche?  
Pakhi nohe jānā, Rādhār kāndon, pratidhvani rūpe āche.  
Mainā nahay, birahisavar, gotkhowā humuniyā.  
Priyatamā mukh, ofandi pariche, seyehe jānā sandhiā.

'Who says it is the flute that is being played on? No, it is the Sylvan deity who is singing. This is not a garland of the Sewālī flowers; it has been knitted with stars. It is no flower garden, it is the princesses (of flower) that are gathering, I tell you with all the emphasis I command. It is no roses; these are the eyes of the beloved which I look at so steadfastly. Who is so unconscious as to say that it is the fawn at play? No, it is the Beauty of the forest that assumes this form and eats the 'durbā' grass thus hopping. It is no tank, it is the heart of love; it is no water, it is love mobile. This is no river; it is no water, it is love, mad after its fellow current. Who calls it a black bee? It is the soul of the harp that hums. That is no butterfly, but the flower of my beloved's *khopā* (lock of hair) that has wings. You call it a Kṛṣṇa bird that sings "Kṛṣṇa" "Kṛṣṇa"? It is no bird but the wailing of a milk-maid that is being resounded. It is no Mainā bird, but it is the heap of sighs of women in separation. It is no Sandhiā (Dusk); it is the beloved's face puffed up.'

**A FATHER OF PASTORAL POETRY.** Lakṣmīnāth is also the father of a type of pastoral poetry written in imitation of folk-songs and ballads. The most popular of such poems is his poem on Badan Phukan who is responsible for the Burmese invasions of Assam:

Kiano ānili Mān, ai Badan tai, kiano ānili Mān?  
 Yāuti yugalai, khiāti rākhili, Asamar katāli kām.  
 Sonare Asamat, dakāit meli dili, Nandanat melili hāti:  
 Bārgharar majiāt, fetigom erili, bhar dupariā rāti.

'Why have you got the Burmese, O Badan, what for should you have got them? You have perpetuated your (ill) reputation, and you have disgraced Asam. You have set robbers in this Asam of gold as you could have set elephants in Eden. You have set the ferocious cobra in the floor of the bed-room at dead of night'. Another beautiful poem of this class is his "Bar aru Saru" (Big and Small):

Dubari banar, pātar ārat, niyare mukutā āre:  
 Okhar malayāi, maramar hātere, cotālar dhūli sāre.  
 Bokār padumat, hāhiti jilike, ākāsar hāhiti pari:  
 Ketekir soṇali, reṇuti uril, cenehar cumāti bhari.  
 Parvatar tingare, akāṇi nijarā, nāmi bhūir bukalai gal:  
 Cenehar hātere, bhūiye sābatile, rangate bandi hai ral.  
 Dubari banatkai, saru tai Lakṣmīnāth, dhūliro talare dhūli:  
 Toko nāpāhare, priyatka priyai tor, ādari labahi tuli.

'The dew hangs pearls on the leaves of the *durbā* grass. The breeze from high sweeps the dusts of the courtyards with hands of affection. The smile of heaven induces the smile of the lotus of the mud. The gold dust of the Keteki flower flies up being filled with the kiss of affection (of the wind so high). The tiny spring from the mountain peak has descended to the low land that has embraced it with arms of affection, and the spring has remained imprisoned in joy. You are humbler than the *durbā* grass, O Lakṣmīnāth, you are dust under the dust; but you too will not be neglected by the Dearest of your dear, and you will be received warmly into his arms.'

A PREACHER. Another essential contribution of Lakṣmīnāth is his researches on the Vaiṣṇavite literature of Assam. His two works 'Śaṅkardew' and 'Śaṅkardew and Mādhawdew' are but a fraction of the mass of his writings on the subject. His researches may now be overcome by newer researches, but all the same, Lakṣmīnāth is bound to be remembered as the inspirer.

A HUMORIST. Lakṣmīnāth embarked on his literary career first as a humorist and it is as a humorist that he is remembered even till now by average readers. As in the case of Dickens, Lakṣmīnāth's humour and pathos are closely associated, and laughter and tears lie closely together in his writings and "frequently invade one another's territory." The seven poor idiotic brothers had just lost their father, who, as they used to say, 'held them each in his womb for ten months and ten days,' not long after the death of their mother; and yet by the irony of fate they turned to be servants of a shrewd and selfish Brahman

for no other fault than that the Brahman had to make the difficult discovery of the missing seventh of them—missing because each of the seven counted their heads leaving his own. This is the opening scene of his first comic play, *Litikāi*. This very vein runs through all his farces and comic works as *Nomah*, *Pācanā*, *Cikarpati-Nikarpati*, *Kṛpābar Baruwār Kākatār Topolā*, *Kṛpābar Baruwār Obhotani*, and a mass of other writings as in his *Bāhi* and other periodicals.

**A REFORMER.** The tremendous popularity which Lakṣmīnāth commanded also was due to the fact that the social reformer in him was not far away from the literary humorist in him. Son of a head-physician (*Bezbaruwā*), he knew his business in literature, and doctored his own society with a smile on his lips. Really he came in a psychological moment of Assamese society and literature—a society just escaping the plague of *Māyāmarā* rebellion and Burmese invasions, and still looking ghastly and pale, with a literature of proud heritage but its prestige of late molested, and of self-confidence robbed. Never did the people need so badly to be taught to laugh, and Lakṣmīnāth helped at such a time of strain and stress. His was “a rainbow humour”, for he mostly smiled at us through his tears. This applies, for example, to the humour of his *Litikāi*, and applies generally to his *Kṛpābar*. He used literature as a platform for his sermons, and he mostly laughed at his own cost.

**A FOUNDER OF SHORT STORIES.** Lakṣmīnāth is also the founder of modern short stories in Assamese. He not only collected and edited the old folk-tales but also wrote the short stories of *Sādhu Kathār Kuki*, and *Surabhi* and many more stories besides, published in *Bāhi* and other local magazines. His stories show a great range of subjects culled generally from all grades of Assamese society and particularly from village life. All his stories also illustrate his careful observation, painting of characters true to life, psychological study of situations and character, and above all of broad human sympathy. *Bhadarī*, a poor peasant's wife, was stabbed by her husband in a fit of fury and hunger, and she lay senseless for days together in the hospital where she was removed to by the police. When she came to her sense, the first word she uttered was about an enquiry in regard to her husband's fooding, and when tried in the court, *Bhadarī*, in order to shield him against imprisonment, told the noble and generous untruth that it is she who got herself accidentally wounded, a statement which draws tears from every eye.

**AN UNCROWNED KING** of Assamese literature Lakṣmīnāth had been for nearly forty years, preceding his death. If the skeleton of modern

Assamese literature was built by the American Baptist Missionaries, and it is the trinity of Anandaram-Hemcandra-Guṇābhirām that gave it flesh and blood, it must be Lakṣmīnāth whose touch made it quick with life. He was undoubtedly the all-acknowledged dictator of the literature with a towering personality and with command over all spheres of literature, old and new. He had at once been a terror and inspirer to all new writers with the Kṛpābar's rod and with the magic healing of a Bezbaruwā or master-physician which he had been. His personality was certainly a potent factor for almost half a century. It is he who first brought a genuine smile to reign over every Assamese face and a robust optimism to rule in every heart for the future of Assam, he himself living outside it almost his whole life.

HEMCANDRA GOSWAMI (1872-1928) was born on the 8th January in a place called Dhekīal in the Golaghat sub-division. His father Dambarudhar who was a Mauzadar of the place died in his pilgrimage at Benares when Hemcandra was only eight years old. He with his younger brother and sister was brought up by his widowed mother Ghanakāntī, and Hemcandra passed his Entrance Examination from Nagāo in the First Division in 1888. He secured a competitive scholarship of Rs. 20 per mensem with the help of which he got himself admitted into the Presidency College, Calcutta, whence he passed the First Arts Examination in 1890. Here he came in touch with Candrakumār and Lakṣmīnāth with whom a literary brotherhood was soon established and the trinity formed which brought about the happy Romantic movement in Assamese literature. Being too much pre-occupied in the literary activities, he failed in the B.A. Examination in 1892 and returned home without any Degree.

He married Bāmā Sundarī in May, 1888, and now with the help of his father-in-law desired to study Law privately. Side by side, he managed to get the Headmastership of Sonaram Aided High School, Gauhati, and also happened to come across a manuscript of Assam History which he rendered into English. Introduced with this work by a well-wisher to Mr. Gait, the then Chief Commissioner of Assam, he came under happier stars, and was soon appointed a Sub-Deputy Collector in December 2, 1895; and from this post he was promoted to be an Extra Assistant Commissioner on the 2nd May 1905, whence he retired in January 15, 1926, then drawing a pay of Rs. 750 per mensem. He could not enjoy his well-earned pension very long, for he died two years and three months after, on 2nd May at 11 a.m. in his residence at Gauhati, when he was only 56 years old.

When Hemchandra was only thirteen his mother contrived to have him sent to Nagāo to live with a relative of the family for the

purpose of education. Nagāo was then the centre of the literary revival which followed the due recognition of Assamese as the language of the schools and courts. The leading figure was Guṇābhirām Baruwā and among the members were Bholānāth Das, Ratneswar Mahanta, Padmahās Goswāmī, Rudrām Bardalai, Dharmeswar Goswāmī, Baladew Mahanta, Balinārāyan Barā, Naranāth Mahanta, Ratnadhar, Baruwā, Candrahās Bhuyā, Mahadānanda Bhattacharya, Mrs. Padmāvati Devi Phukanani and Mrs. Viṣṇupriya Devi. Being thrown into the atmosphere of Nagāo, an impressionable youth like Hemcandra whose literary instincts had already been roused, could not long remain outside its domination and sway. Guṇābhirām was not slow in detecting the potentiality of the youth, and welcomed the latter's articles in the pages of the *Asam Bandhu* of which he was the founder and editor." (Preface, A.S.C., Vol. 1, p. XXVI).

Hemcandra's services to literature were of a little different nature. In his earlier days his poetic gift was more prominent. Indeed he wrote some of his nice poems, first published in *Asam Bandhu* and then included in his *Fular Cāki* (A Garland of Flowers). Many of his poems as *Jonākī* or *Puā* show a poetic diction and a majesty of poetic style and metre with a command over the art that would do honour to any first-rate poetic genius. Then his pleasing love-poem "Kāko Āru Hiyā Nibilāo (To none shall I give my heart any more) appeared in the second issue of the first volume of *Jonākī* and his beautiful poem *Jonākī* (The Glow-Worm) was published in the first issue of third volume of the journal.

**FIRST ASSAMESE SONNET.** Hemcandra also showed the first sample of a sonnet in Assamese in his "Priyatamār Cithi" (A letter from the Beloved) observing the rhyming forms of the original Italian type and this too was published in the *Jonākī*.

"Saundaryar bukar kācali udangāi  
Prakṛtir co-ghar cālō pit pit:  
Kukurāthengīā sei ākharkitit  
Yi mohini, sanā āche kato āru nāi.  
Kavi-nikunjat fuli kata kavitāi  
Malayāt uti uti fure pṛthivīt:  
Tomār cithiye kintu jāne yiti gīt  
Kavitār kāvyē tār gondhako nāpāy.  
Ful fule, sari yāi, śukāi banani,  
Basantar kūhipāt radat lerele:  
Tomār cithiye, priye, jāne ki mohini  
Nītau nohoā bāhi nānā ful mele.  
Yata śungo, cumā khāō, nālāge āmani:  
Hṛdayat hepāhar bhotā tarā jvale."



'Have I searched the green-room of Nature through and through by removing the wrapper of Beauty's chest; but never have I found such a charm pasted any where as it is in those handwritings that are hen-footed. How poems without number blossoming in the bowers of poets have wafted in the cool fragrant breeze; but the poetry of the poets have not even had the scent of that song which your letter knows. The flower blossoms and withers and so do the grass and the new lovely leaves of Spring; but what charm your letter knows, O beloved, that there blossom flowers that are ever new and know no withering; and however much I smell and kiss, I feel not tired, and there shines the Venus of desire (for ever).

Hemcandra's assistance to Colonel Gurdon in editing the Hemkoṣ and to Sir Gait in hunting materials for the latter's *History of Assam* was certainly more than that of a subordinate to his superiors. Hemcandra's discharge of duties as a special officer from October, 1912 to March, 1913, for collection of old Assamese manuscripts was scrupulously more than an official affair. His contribution to the establishment of the Assam Research Society and of the Assam Literary Association, and his compiling and editing of the *Typical Selections of Assamese Literature* for the Calcutta University, *Kathā Gitā*, *Kathā Bhāgawat*, *Puraṇi Asam Buraṇji* and many other works will remember him to posterity even long after many other things die out.

Romanticism in Assamese literature was in no way confined to poetry, but was carried on also to other domains such as that of the novel. Pdmāwati's *Sudharman Upākhyān*, issued in 1884, was really far from a novel in the strict sense of the term. The writer plainly admits in her preface dated 30th Śrāvan, 1806 Śakābda (about July 15, 1884): 'Saj āru asaj mānuhar kārjyar fal dekhuāi ei puthir pradhān uddeśya.' 'It is the principal aim of this book to show the respective results of good and evil deeds.' So here the book rather describes the deeds of the hero Satyabān and the heroine Sudharnā, more as a long story than studying or presenting their problems of life. Padmanāth was really the next in the field publishing his social novel *Bhānumatī* in *Bijuli* in 1892. He also published his *Lāharī*, another novel, in 1890. Rajanikānta Bardalai wrote his novels about this time, and another writer Hareswar Sarmā also published his novel *Kusum Kumārī* in 1899.

RAJANIKANTA BARDALAI'S (1867-1939) grandfather Tuārām Dihingiā Bardalai, earlier resided somewhere in upper Assam whence he left for Śāntipur in Navadvīp, after his elder brother was put to death by the Burmese in their notorious invasion of Assam,—one of the main causes which led their grandson to take this historical event

for themes of nearly half a dozen of his novels. Tuārām returned well-versed in Sanskrit learning and settled for some years at Bajāli in Kāmṛūp where he subsequently married, and his son Narakanta, the father of Rajanikanta, had been born. Thence they moved first to the village Bāosi in Hajo and then to Gauhati when the town came to be first established. Here Rajanikanta was born on the 24th November. His father was at first a clerk at Gauhati in the office of General Jenkins, and then helped the survey and settlement work of the town, and lastly served and retired as a clerk of the chief Commissioner's office when it was first established at Shillong.

Rajanikānta lost his father when he was nine and his next brother seven years old; the two other younger brothers who were then five and two years respectively soon followed their father. Rajanikānta then had his maternal uncle as his guardian and passed the Entrance Examination in 1885 with a scholarship of Rs. 20 per mensem. He got admitted into the Metropolitan Institution (now Vidyasagar College), Calcutta, whence he passed the First Arts Examination in 1887 in the first Division. He then got admitted into the B.A. class in the City College and into the First Year of the Medical College, Calcutta, and got his B.A. Degree in 1889.

As in many others, *Jonākī* became the common touch-stone in their literary life. He essayed an article, as a medical student, on physiology and contributed it to this paper. After being graduated, he left his medical studies and returned home to serve as a clerk in the Deputy Commissioner's office at Gauhati, whence he was transferred to be a Census clerk there which experience he utilised in his humorous article "Census Piyal" published in *Bāhī* in 1909 by his pseudo-name Bholāi Śarmā. While still a clerk there he collaborated with Kanak Lāl Baruwā and Gopāl Kṛṣṇa De to write one drama named *Sāvitṛī-Satyavān*, which was since lost in manuscript, and they formed an Amateur Theatre Party, an experience which again he utilises in another humorous article "Ātma Vinodak Theatre Dal" (An Amateur Theatre Party) written under the same pseudo-name Bholāi Śarmā and published in *Alocanī* in 1909.

Having been in the good books of then Census Superintendent Mr. Gait, Rajanikanta was promoted in 1892 to be a Sub-Deputy Collector at North Lakhimpur where he had an intimate knowledge of the Miri life which inspired him to write his first Assamese romantic novel *Miri-Jiyarī* where he gives also a description of the Lakhimpur court. Here he wrote a monograph on "Religion of the Miris" for Gait. In 1894 he was transferred to Barpeta where he wrote his first historical novel *Manomati* where one finds also some description

of the Barpeta Satra. In 1901 he was promoted to be an Extra Assistant Commissioner from which post he retired in February, 1918.

An extremely good soul as Rajanikānta undoubtedly had been, his life abounded in family misfortunes beginning with the deaths of his father and two younger brothers in his boyhood. In 1909 he lost his thirteen-year old second son, and in the following year his first son, who just passed the First Arts Examination brilliantly, died of typhoid. Unhappy, however, in his service life he took to business and established the Haveda tea-garden in Makum, Dibrugarh, spending all he earned in his life and devoted himself heart and soul into it in his retired life. But by and by it also failed and he had to sell the tea-garden and all he had at Dibrugarh to relieve himself of debt. He now came to Gauhati to count and pass his days peacefully, if possible; but here also he was disappointed. He soon had a bad attack of paralysis to which he succumbed. He died at Gauhati in a locality near about the one where he was born.

Rajanikānta wrote little besides his novels that will be long remembered. One school text book *Jnāna Sopān* (1897), one monthly journal *Pradīpikā* (1925-26) of religious controversies, a few monographs, scientific articles and Presidential Addresses are all that is meant. But the humorous stories or narrations now collected and published as by Bholāi Śarmā will no doubt he enjoyed long for the large-hearted sympathy of Rajanikānta's humour, a rare thing indeed. His exquisite romantic novel *Miri Jiyarī* (1895) is his only novel that is not historical. His *Dandua Droh* (1909), *Rādhā-Rukminī Rāṇ* in *Asam Hitaishi* (in 1926) are novels of different epochs and events on the history of Assam. His *Manomati* (1900), *Rangili* (1925), *Nirmal Bhakat* (1928) and *Rahdai Ligiri* (1930) are novels bearing on the events of Burmese invasions of Assam. These four novels may rather be called four parts of one novel tracing the full development of this or that character, above others, in certain parts, and giving a panoramic view of the horrible days of the Burmese misrule.

AN ASSAMESE SCOTT. "These historical novels" says Carlyle about Sir Walter Scott, have taught all men this truth, which looks like a truism and yet was as good as unknown to the writers of history and others, till so taught, that the bygone ages of the world were actually filled by living men not by state papers, controversies, and abstractions of men." The same statement is true of Rajanikānta's novels too, and in this respect he rendered a great service to history. It is no jugglery or literary trick that he applies to make us feel so. "History's true object of study is the human mind" and Rajanikānta, as the fruit of

such studies and by intuition, brings home to us that we are but a product of the past forming an organic whole with it. Byron's comment: "Walter Scott is as nearly a thoroughly good man as man can be, because I know it by experience to be the case"—also applies to Rajanikānta. A man of simple straightforward nature, full of good sense, he had a genuine love for the common people around him whose simplicity and idiosyncracies he heartily sympathised. Retired of late from Assam Civil Service, and heard through the length and breadth of Assam as one of the greatest personalities, Rajanikānta, as the story goes, was driven to the back benches in a monster meeting by ignorant volunteers when he went to take his seat on a chair reserved for the elite or the town, like one of which he did not seem in his good old-fashioned ways!

So novels in his hand do not appear so much as a type of literature borrowed from Europe, but have often the spontaneity and ease of gossip or tales told by the fireside by our grandfathers about the horrors of Burmese invasions or such allied subjects from the past history of Assam. He had not only a genius for vitalising the past and a happy knack of improvisation, but was also dowered with a creative energy of imagination which is responsible for so many beautiful fictitious characters of his novels like Dālimī, Pānei, Manomatī, Pamili, Rangilī, Rahdai and many others that appear as living among us. Unlike many other humorists of his day, his humour never verged on satire, satire usually smelling the moralist. But again like Scott, he was a moralist in effect, if not by intent. In the whole range of his fictitious characters hardly does one come across the shadow of a real villain, man or woman; and even in depicting villains of history, Satrām, for example, in his *Rangilī*, he is scrupulously careful on this point, with the result that in such cases also one does not find a really bad man but man who does bad deeds. In this very novel, for example, one finds several pairs of lovers engrossed in love-making on the occasion of nocturnal Bihu dances, but not a single girl yet molested. On being entreated for a kiss, one young girl appreciates her lover's sentiment while denying him the boon asked for: 'Do marry me soon, and then have as many long long kisses your heart would desire. But, now, good night! My companions are awaiting me yonder.'

**BROAD HUMAN SYMPATHY.** All this betrays great breadth and long range of his sympathies. Even as a humorist we find that he prefers to laugh with his people than laugh at them, and if he has to laugh at anybody's cost he would do so at his own. His Bholāi Śarmā, directly Rajanikānta himself, engaged as a Census Enumerator was at a fix to ascertain the age of a young girl who could not or would not commit

it herself. Age in case of bullocks is judged by seeing their teeth, and the idiosyncrasy of the Enumerator prompted him to ask the girl to show him her teeth, when, to his surprise he found the girl wild with anger at this insult, though not meant, rushing upon him with the broom-stick to assault, when lo! he took to his heels and fled. Thus one finds that while, like Sir Walter Scott, Rajanikānta may be called the founder of the Assamese novel in general and historical novel in particular, his other contributions to Assamese literature were this element of broad sympathy and the most kindly humour, mild even as that of Chaucer. True it is that novels had been written before and after him in Assamese, but it is Rajanikānta who at once appears before one's mind's eye when we speak of Assamese novel as a type of literature.

**DEFECTS AS AN ARTIST.** As usual, Rajanikānta's merit as an artist was not unmixed, and he of course had his share of shortcomings. His old grandfatherly ways of narrating stories is a method itself foreign to the novel. Every now and then he uses the vocative case "O reader, do you recognise" etc. etc. which is tiresome more often than not. He would even stop in the midst of an interesting conversation of his heroes or heroines to introduce the reader to a different subject thus rendering the description unnatural and giving a check to the flow of the events. He also sometimes indulges in didacticism, as in his *Nirmal Bhakat*, again the grandfatherly way of giving morals to the children. His command over his language does not always seem perfect and he does not seem to have had that excellence of style that could be expected of such a master artist. The painter's brush in his hand appear in general to have after all been short of what may really be called fine; for original as he had been in his creation of Dālimī in his novel *Miri-Jiyarī*, he was practically robbed of all its glory by the character of Dālimī of the drama *Jaymatī Kūwarī* by Lakṣmīnāth Bezbaruwā, and was thus beaten in his own field, for being unable to show a finished product of art in his magnificent creation of the character. His novels often lack in problems of life and in any attempt to present or study them. But despite these apparent shortcomings Rajanikānta was a great writer and his novels like *Manomatī* have been dramatised and have been presented to the silver screen.

## XII. VARIED WRITERS OF LATER ROMANTICISM

DURGAPRASAD MAJINDAR BARUWA (1870-1928) was a resident of Sūkān Pukhuri in the environs of the Sibsagar town. He was a poet of the line of Baladew Mahanta writing poems for children in particular in a simple and easy style, but having a poetic diction of no mean

order. His *Uju Kavita* (1896), *Larā-Kavitā* (1899) and *Ful* (1899) are such collections. His mythological dramas *Bṛiṣaketu* and *Guru Dakṣiṇā* and his comedies *Mahari* and *Negro*, and the latter in particular deserve special mention. *Mahari* paints a portrait true to life of half-educated Assamese youths going from door to door of European tea-garden managers for apprenticeship as garden 'Babus', the former playing a havoc on English and the latter on Assamese. This is an aspect of Assamese social life of which no second picture has been painted and of which perhaps no better portrait can be drawn. This is one of the few such social dramas that have not been surpassed these fifty years.

MAFIJUDDIN AHMED HAZARIKA (1870-1958) was a resident of Dibrugarh town and was retired as a clerk of the subdivisional court. He is the descendant of one Bagh Hazarika who had been a warrior that fought successfully against the Muhammadans of the west in the battle of Saraighat. His only contribution to literature is the *Jnān Mālinī*, a poetical work of simple and chaste Assamese style for children and youths in the main, published in 1897. Such poems as 'Din Kapā' and 'Marisali khani' have a poetic excellence of no mean order. He enjoyed the second literary pension from the Government of Assam at the rate Rs. 30 per mensem for long.

PANINDRANATH GAGAI (?1870-?1910) was born in the Cetiā Gāo in the environs of the North Lakhimpur town and admitted into the local lower Primary school about November, 1879, whence he was promoted to the Middle Vernacular standard. He then passed the Gauhati Normal school and was then appointed a teacher, first in the Dhakuā-khanā and then in the Town Middle Vernacular school. He became a collaborator of *Sāhitya Sangraha* (1893) and issued his schoolbooks *Asamīyā Larār Bhūgol* and *Larāsikṣā* in three parts, besides contributing a good number of articles in prose and verse to the local magazines. This patriotic youth, who had died an early death, had a command over Assamese, as expressed even through his Assamese primers, that will leave its traces long.

PADMANATH (GOHAI) BARUWA (1871-1946) was born on the 9th Agraḥāyan (in the last week of November), 1793 Sak, in the village of Na-Kari in North Lakhimpur. His father, Ghinārām, came to settle here from Simaluguri Gāo, in Jakāicuk, Jāji, Sibsagar. He got himself admitted into the local Lower Primary School even on the same day with Pānīndranāth, his friend and future collaborator. After passing the Middle Vernacular standard, he came to Sibsagar where he got himself admitted in the Government High School. For sometime

he left the High School and got himself attached to the Survey School of Mandals and Mauzadars as a student, which was however temporary. He again came to the Sibsagar High School whence he passed the Entrance Examination in 1890. Then he went to Calcutta to study the First Arts Course which however he could not pass. He then studied Law and was not successful here either. And at last he was compelled to return home.

This was the time when the *Jonākī* was already published and the Assamese Language-Improving Society was already established and began its activities thus making Calcutta a good centre of radiation of energy of Assamese students. Coming at this moment of fermentation, Padmanāth was at once taken by the storm and he plunged into the activities headlong. He became for sometime the editor of *Bijuli* which was published first as a rival paper of *Jonākī*, from Calcutta. In this paper he published his domestic novel *Bhānumatī* about 1890 and then issued his second novel *Lāharī* on a social theme. When he came back to Assam, he wrote a series of schoolbooks named *Nītisikṣā*, and one *Bhūgol Darpaṇ* and *Asam Buranji*, which fetched him sufficient income.

In the meantime Padmanāth was appointed a teacher in the Assam Subordinate Education Service, and was posted as Headmaster in the Kahimā Middle English School and then an Assistant Master in the Valley High Schools. He was married in the mean time and lost his first wife in 1899. He wrote a long poem on this event and in the name of his deceased wife, called it *Līlā*. It was written in blank-verse in imitation of the style of earlier Kāvyaś like *Abhimanyu Badh* and *Sītā Haraṇ*. But *Līlā* was written a quarter of a century after them and the verse was certainly more mobile. The first few verses of the invocation may show the progress of the rhythm and music of the blank verse.

Nājāno pūjār vidhi, vandanār rīti,  
Viṇāpāṇi Vāgdevi! caraṇ tomār  
Kirūpe pūjim, hāi, bandim kimate!  
Bajoā ananta kāl sanjibanī bīṇā,  
Gahin jokāre tār kāpāi banani  
Sarāi katanā ful kavi-fulanit.

In 1900 Padmanāth issued his book of small poems and named it *Jurani* (cooling) and issued *Līlā* sometime after. He had a happy knack for poetry and prose alike, and though he had not the classical acumen, he had a diction in Assamese that may be called his own. Here is his beautiful poem *Oranī* (The Veil):



Mari yadi jō punu, jiwan salanikai:  
 Mari mari janma dharō, ramanī oraṇi hai.  
 Abegar cheg dhari, dharōte priyāk lāje;  
 Bacām mukhani dhāki, awalā sārathi sāje.  
 Ahile basanta-rāj, malayāt uti-buri:  
 Bijuli bayankhani, dekhūām uri uri.  
 Cakue cakue duyo caku kathā pātōtei:  
 Bicched dhemāli cām dhāki dhari lācatei.  
 Cewe cewe theo dhari, miciki hāhiti cām.  
 Igāle pohar di, ābegat cumā khām.  
 Dherekani- dhumuhāi, akasmāte gāji ūthi:  
 Bicchedar bibhīsikā, yadihe dekhāi mathi.  
 Apāyak ār kari, priyāk bujani dim:  
 Bimariṣ cakupāni cipe cipe tuki pim.  
 Aman-jimankai thākōte nīrale bahi:  
 Āmolani śobhā cām khopāt lācate khahi.  
 Saundarjyar rūp-ras biringile kapālat:  
 Kapālare machi lam ulāhere tilakat.  
 Eteke bāsanā mor pūrṇa hay jāte ai:  
 Mari janma labhō yen ramanī oraṇi hai.

'When I am born again let me be born repeatedly as the veil of a woman. When my beloved will be overpowered with shyness, shall I save her by covering her face. When the gentle breeze of Spring comes, shall I reveal her face, bright as the lightning, by dancing in it. While we are speaking with eyes, shall I see the fun of separation by hiding her face. Shall I see her gentle smile by moving poetically to and fro; and shall kiss, out of emotion, her cheek by allowing light on the other. If there be storms and thunderbolts, threatening separation, shall I remove all her fears and console her, and shall drink her tears of sorrow in rhythmic movements. When she sits sorrowfully, I shall enjoy that peerless beauty by shrinking on her lock of hair. When her beauty appears in the form of perspiration, shall I take it as an ointment. So may God fulfil my desire so that I may be reborn as the veil of a woman.'

Late in his life he also published *Kṛṣṇa Carit*, in prose showing his leaning towards serious literature, and earlier he issued a synopsis of the *Gītā*, as *Gītā Sār*. His dramas on historical and such topics are *Gadāhar*, *Jaymatī*, *Sādhana* and *Lachit Phukan*, and his comedies are *Teton Tamuli*, *Gaōburhā* and *Bhut ne Bhram*. Padmanath may be called a man of versatile talents in novel, drama, poetry and other writings. Besides this, politics was also his favourite game, and he first appeared rather as a public man with such organisations as the Ahom Association, Assam Association, etc. If the intrinsic merit of his works is not quite considerable he must be remembered for his variety and his leading works as in novels.

BENUDHAR RAJKHOWA. (1872-1956) was born on the 11th December 1872 at Khowāng, on the banks of the Dihing river, a few miles off

from the Dibrugarh town, as the youngest son of Suchāndrām Rāj-khowā, the influential Mauzadar of the locality. Benudhar got himself admitted to the Dibrugarh Government High School, after passing the Jaypur Middle English School, and get through the Entrance examination in 1889 from the former. He then got himself admitted to the First Arts course of the Presidency College, Calcutta, but passed the Course from Ripon College of the same city in 1892. Then he took his B.A. degree from the same college in 1896, and joined the M.A. and B.L. classes in Calcutta. Meanwhile, in 1899, he was offered the post of a Sub Deputy Collector which he joined and left his studies. From this post he was soon recruited to the Assam Civil Service whence he retired in 1931 as officiating Deputy Commissioner, Sibsagar.

Early in his school career Benudhar had strong learning towards Assamese literature, and devoted himself to it whole-heartedly since he came to Calcutta in 1889, becoming the editor of the Assamese magazine *Bijuli*, in its third year. Even as a student, he became the author of *Nīti-Path* (Moral Lessons) in 1889, *Sāhitya Prabes* (Entrance to Literature) and *Panca Kavitā* (Five Poems) in 1895, and of *Larā Puthi* (Children's Primers) about this time. He also published his *Das-Gīt* (Ten Songs) in 1899, being one of the pioneer works of modern Assamese songs and edited the *Ādi Kānda Rāmāyaṇ*, published by Ganesram Agarwala this very year. His *Saru Larār Gān* (Songs of little children), another collection of modern Assamese songs, was issued about this time as also his *Candra Sambhav Kāvya*, this latter work being another pioneer work in the field of modern Assamese Kāvya. Benudhar's *Seuti-Kiran* is a leading modern drama presenting a picture of modern Assamese society, and was issued as early as 1894, with fine character-sketching. As early as 1899, Benudhar also published some stray, scenes of Assamese society, in collaboration with Padmanath Baruwa, and named it *Dekā-Gabharu* (Young men and women); this was probably a failure and invited hostile criticisms from such writers as Lakshminath Bezbaruwā, and it transpires that this difference of opinion was responsible for the appearance of *Bijuli*. Any way, Benudhar was already known as an author and a prolific writer even as a student in the nineties of the last century.

Nor did Benudhar allow himself ease and comfort, away from literary pursuits, when he entered service life and the world. In the small hours of the morning of the present century, he used to issue books with unceasing zeal. In 1901 he published his songs *Asamīyā Bhāi*; in 1903, his mythological drama *Duryodhanar Urubhanga*; in 1906, his poems *Bāhī*, (The Flute) and in 1908, another mythological drama, *Dakṣa-Yajna*, appeared. One important work of this period

in prose is his *Lakṣmī Tīrotā* (The Auspicious wife) in which in the novel form of a dialogue, he tries to depict an ideal Assamese wife. His *Bihu*, a prose work on the theory and practice of the great Assamese festival, is another useful work of this first decade of the present century. In the second and third decades he mainly issued many dramas social and farcical, but all educative; and some small poetical works regarding this life and beyond. *Durbār* is such a play of a few scenes depicting the mirths and frivolities of the Durbar of king George V celebrated in India in 1912, and was issued accordingly. *Kali Yuga* (The Iron Age) is another play, written in imitation of Hem Candra Baruwā's *Kānīār Kīrttan* as a satire on Assamese society, in collaboration with Durgaprasad Majindar Baruwā. Similar other plays of this period are *Kurī Satikār Sabhyatā* (Civilization of the Twentieth Century) *Tini Ghaini* (Three Wives), *Asikṣitā Ghaini* (The uneducated wife), *Corar-Sṛṣṭi* (The Thief's Invention), *Yampuri* (The Abode of the God of Death) and so forth, each depicting one side or the other of Assamese social life. His latest poetical works include *Dehar Pralay* (Deluge of the Body), *Jīwan Sandhiā* (The Evening of Life), *Sipurīr Bātari* (The Message of the other world) *Punaruththān* (Resurrection) and so forth. His *Mahasatī Jaymatī* depicts a life-like picture of the sufferings to which Jaymatī was subjected in songs composed after indigenous ballads.

Benudhar's monumental work in Assamese language is not his *Candra-Sambhav Kavya* nor his *Seuty-Kiran Nātak*, but his *Asamiyā Khanda Bākyā, Koṣ* or the Dictionary of Assamese Phrases and Idioms, explained in Assamese and English. It is a pioneer work and has no second yet. Besides this he has written a large number of books in English to acquaint the non Assamese readers with the glories of Assam. Such works are his *Brochure on the Assamese Language* issued as early as the 14th October, 1898, from 24, Ramakanta Mistry's Lane, Calcutta; his *Assamese Demonology*, 1905; *Notes on the Sylheti Dialect*, 1913 showing that the Sylheti dialect is more akin to Assamese than to Bengali; *Short Accounts of Assam*, 1915; *Historical Sketches of Assam*, 1917; English rendering of *Vipra Damodar*, 1918; *Holy Nam-Ghoṣā*, 1919; *Some Popular Superstitions of Assam*, 1920; and his English rendering *Kānkhawā* (Ear-Eater), 1919; and *Gunmālā*, 1923; deserve special mention.

Benudhar's contribution to Assamese literature and culture is manifold. As a writer he is almost as voluminous as Lakṣmināth Bezbaruwā, even if he is not as popular. Benudhar's defect, if any, seems to be that in his zeal to be strictly national and original, he often lives more in Assam of by-gone days than in the living present

both in regard to his matter and his language and style, and as his earlier works have been out of print the present generation have little chance to become acquainted with his writings. Any way, Benudhar's claim to live long in the memory of posterity cannot be called in question.

RAJANIKUMAR PADMAPATI (1866-1948) is another Assamese research scholar of considerable originality who presented the results of his researches mainly in English. The earliest of his research work was presented to the readers of the monthly magazine *Bāhi* (1909-'10), and was later reproduced as *Purānā Asamat Bhumuki* (A glimpse of Ancient Assam). Rajanikānta is the first and foremost research scholar who made any systematic effort to trace the history of the Kalitās of Assam and to study the Epics and Purāṇas to find out new information in regard to the antiquities of the ancient kingdom of Pragjyotisha or Kāmarūpa. He also had some interest in Botany and made some researches in that line. His works in English that were much appreciated include *Origin of the Animal world* (1915); *A Treatise ascertaining the correct sites of places*; *A strange mistake of the Geographers* (1926); *Christ as Kṛṣṇa* (1937). All the bold conclusions of Rajani Kumar may not be truths beyond doubt, nor his method of research quite modern or scientific, but that he opened eyes into new vistas of unexplored grounds, which have later on been explored by subsequent scholars with much advantage, cannot be denied.

ANANDA CANDRA AGARWALA (1874-1939) is just the next man who in his later life felt deeply interested in the researches in regard to the antiquities of Assam, and studied the Epics and the Purāṇas for the purpose. But it is in poetry that he was interested earlier and one may almost assert that it is for his poetry that he will be remembered long after men manage to forget his research works. He belonged to the same family of Assamese Āgarwālās as Haribalas and his son Candrakumar, the poet. Ānanda Candra was born at Kalangpur in the Tezpur subdivision in 1874, to his father Kāsirām and his mother Rādhikā. He was educated in the Tezpur Government High School whence he passed his Entrance Examination in 1891, and got himself admitted to the First Arts course in the Metropolitan (now Vidya-sagar) College, Calcutta, securing a monthly scholarship of the value of Rs. 20. Ānanda Candra also was highly interested in literature from his schoolboy days, and in Calcutta he just launched into the Assamese students' activities in the Assamese Language Improving Society and the Assamese magazines, *Jonākī* and *Bijulī*, with the result that like some of his senior Assamese friends he had to return home without any University Degree whatsoever. For sometime he served

as a teacher in the Sibsagar Bezbaruwā High School, and then entered the Police Department as a subordinate officer and retired in the early thirties of this century as a senior Police Superintendent in the Imperial Police Service.

Ānandacandra rendered the famous poem "Psalm of Life" of the American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow into Assamese verse before he passed his Entrance Examination. This poem, *Jīwan Sangīt*, may be called his masterpiece and is not only better than the Bengali rendering, but even seems almost original. This his knack of translating famous English poems into Assamese has almost become proverbial whence he has been styled the Assamese Prince of Translators. His famous translations include those of the poems "Better Land" by Mrs. Hemans, "Edwin and Angelina" by Oliver Goldsmith in his *Vicar of Wakefield*, and so forth. Compared with his translations, his original poems are really few, unless we call many of his translated poems original. Ānanda Candra was a regular contributor to the *Jonāki*, *Bāhī* and many other papers. Even as a student Ānandacandra collaborated with Brahmānanda Barkākati, Nabincandra Bardalai and Krisna Agarwala and published a collection of their songs numbering 141, and styled it "Dharma Sangīt". He and Krishna Prasad offered best help to Karunābhiram Baruwa when the latter edited and published his *Lara-Bāndhu* (Children's Companion), the first Assamese monthly for Assamese children, started in 1888. But Ānandacandra's literary out-put was very small as an author despite his life-long literary activities. His publications include his Assamese primers *Ādi Pāth* and *Komal Pāth*, and only one small collection of his poems, mainly verse-renderings of familiar English poems, *Jilikani* (Radiance). He kept a fine collection of his best poems *Padumani* (The Lotus Lake) ready for print, but unfortunately it never came out. He died without leaving any issue and his wife Pārijāt Āgarwālā soon followed him. In spite of his Police uniform, he was a noble soul of proverbially amiable nature and with deep-seated love for Assamese language, literature and people. In prose writing he was a great descendant of Lambodar Barā.

CANDRADHAR BARUWA was born at Jorhat, sometime about September, 1874. He passed his Entrance Examination in 1892, and got through First Arts Course two years later from the Metropolitan College, Calcutta. He then got himself attached to the B.A. class in the St. Xavier's College of the city but failed to secure the Degree and returned home as an under-Graduate in 1896. In 1900 he passed the pleadership examination and joined the Bar. After ten years' practice he gave up the Bar and took to tea-cultivation where he eventually thrived. He acquired a literary taste even as a student, and in 1904

appeared as the author of *Meghnād Badh Nāṭak* written in blank-verse. In 1915 he published his serio-comic play, *Bhāgya Parikṣā*, admittedly a borrowed plot but adapted to suit Assamese society. Later he published his second drama *Tilottana Sambhav* and a collection of his satiric and other poems, *Ranjan*, in the twenties of the present century. There may be little to show that Candradhar had much gift of originality, but there can be no denying the fact that he shows a happy talent in poetical expressions in Assamese with considerable command over poetic diction and style that makes him popular to his readers. A few of his satiric poems as "Kāvya Viśāradohaṃ" (I am a past Master in the poetic Art) "Āmi Bhakat" (We are Devotees) etc. combine the reformer with a refined taste, and with some other poems may easily survive his dramatic writings.

HITESWAR BARBARUA (1877-1938), was born to Chikau Gagai Barbaruwa, at Saru Carāi Jorhat, in December, 1877. Though belonging to the illustrious family of Bhadari Barbaruwā, formerly minister to the Ahom King, Hiteswar was born in straitened family circumstances and as such had to leave his studies from the top class of the Jorhat Government High School in quest of a job, and was at last appointed a tea-garden clerk. Hiteswar's poetic gifts were overpowering, and neither his pecuniary circumstances nor his uncongenial tea-garden service could stand in the way of their development. He apparently read very extensively in English literature and had a clear knowledge of the early history of Assam. He was an authority on the history of Ahom rule in Assam and has left a voluminous and monumental work on the subject in manuscript.

To use both his poetical gift and wide knowledge of history, Hiteswar chose to write a series of Kavyas in Assamese blank verse just as Michael Madhusudan Dutta and Nabin Sen did in Bengali literature. In 1902 he appeared first with his *Dhopākali* (The Blossom) a collection of his early poems written about 1899. Then followed his historical Kāvya *Kamatāpur Dhvaṃsa Kāvya* written in 1903-1912; *Birahinār Bilāp Kāvya* written in 1896-1915, and *Tīrotār Ātmaḍān Kāvya Jaymati Kāvya* written in 1912-1913; *Abhās Kāvya* in 1914; *Yuddha Kṣetrat Āhom Ramani Kāvya* in 1915; *Angilā* and *Desdemona Kāvya* in 1917, etc. in quick succession. There also appeared his historical novel *Mālītā* in 1914, and also his sonnets, *Mālach* in 1918 and *Calcu-Lo* (Tears) in 1922. Besides his great historical work, *Āhomar Din*, another poetical work by him, *Talsarā Fular Tini Ājali*, written in 1899-1914, has been left in manuscript.

Hiteswar is really the last, but not the least, of the writers of modern Assamese Kāvya. Ramākānta and Bīlōlānāth wrote their

Kāvya on the themes of the great Epics, the Mahabharata and the Rāmāyaṇa respectively. Then came their successor Padmanāth about a quarter of a century later who though named his work *Lilā Kāvya*, really wrote a lyric in blank verse. Last came Hiteśwar with a brighter horizon and issued his historical Kāvya properly so called. Bholānāth's language and style was nick-named Anglo-Benglo-Assamese for the mixture of the English and Bengali words and grammar with Assamese, and hence may be left out of account. Ramākānta's language and style were dignified Assamese, and naturally contained a little high percentage of Sanskrit words, while in Hiteśwar's Kāvya the percentage of colloquial Assamese words is higher. It is complained in certain quarters that such a high percentage of colloquial Assamese words cannot be in keeping with the dignity and serenity so essential to a Kāvya. But this is not a unanimous verdict on the point. Another charge levelled against both Padmanāth and Hiteśwar is that their styles are more verbose and they much indulge in luxury of words, which seems not unjustified.

Besides a genuine poetic temperament with which he was certainly gifted, Hiteśwar had a poetic situation created by his very family misfortunes. He lost his second son in 1910, his wife in 1912 and his third son in 1921. These sad occurrences which deeply affected his poetic mind also coloured all his poetical works and he produced some "sweetest songs" in Assamese language that "tell of saddest thought". Indeed some of his lyrics as "Prāṇar Jiten" (Jiten, dearer than life), an elegy on the death of his second son, are almost unparalleled in modern Assamese literature, but they are rather too long to be quoted. But here is one love sonnet of Hiteśwar to give an idea of his lyric genius. The poem is named *Kāṇar Thuriā* (The Ear-Ornament) and may be compared with Padmanāth's *Orāṇi*.

Pūrva janmar jāno kata puṇya bale  
Thuriā janam pāli tai jagatat;  
Sōte khāote kimbā uthōte bahōte  
Cumā dia preyasir komal gālat.  
Yi cumār hēpāhat ātur premik,  
Premar rājyar yito amūlya ratan,  
Yāk lai samsārar sakalo baliā.  
Anāyāse tai kintu pāwa sei dhan.  
Ji cumār māthō eti pābar āsāt  
Premike uchāṅgā kare parāṇ nijar,  
Sei cumā lākhe lakhe nite pāwa tai,  
Nājāno ki puṇya tor āchil pūrvar.  
Nahal āmār kiya thuriā janam:  
Pālō hay nite kata madhur cumban.

'Oh, I know not for what immense virtues of past life hast thou been born in the world as a long ear-ornament! For thou showerest kisses



on the tender cheeks of the beloved what during her sleep or meals and what while she rises or sits. Kisses, so precious jewels in the empire of Love, after which lovers are so thirsty and others too are mad, are easily obtainable by thee. Oh, I know not what virtues didst thou acquire in your former life that thou securest kisses by lacs for only one of which lovers sacrifice their life. Oh, why were we not born as such an ear-ornament that we could enjoy as many ambrosial kisses from day to day.' The sonnet, though not technically complete in octave and sestet and in other strictly Petrarchan forms, and only loosely imitates a Shakespearian form, breathes a freshness and romance quite its own.

RAGHUNATH CAUDHARI, familiar rather as a bird-poet, was born about January, 1880, at Gauhati. He was disabled in his early childhood having his feet deformed by a fall and lost both his parents about this time. His education was also haphazard and he left school after completing the minor classes of the local High School. But he was certainly gifted with poetic talents, and though he was thus denied the chance of enriching his mind with any study of English or Sanskrit literature he seems to have read the rising Bengali literature of the nineteenth century sufficiently to germinate his poetic talents and to catch a glimpse of the romantic revival of English poetry through Bengali. It was the first decade of the twentieth century and he tried his hand in Assamese poetry first in the pages of the second series *Jonākī*, now published from Gauhati. Thus it is that in most of his early poems we find enough traces of Bengali grammar and Bengali poetic diction. But he did not take long to overcome this and he soon acquired Assamese poetic diction of no mean order. *Sādarī* (The Dear One), first published before the second decade of this century, contained about 28 poems written upto that time included at least half a dozen poems that showed his originality. 'Goāhe ebār mor priya bihangini' (Sing once more, O my favourite female bird) was both the title and burden of a poem of this collection, and perhaps the best poem of the book. It has a poetic flow and diction quite his own, though it still betrays his much reading of Bengali literature in the grammatical constructions. Here and there we find glimpses of ideas borrowed from the famous English bird poems as Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale," Shelley's "To a Skylark," Wordsworth's "The Skylark" and "To the Cuckoo" and so forth. In another small poem on *Keteki*, the Assamese Nightingale, in the same metre, perhaps written following the comparative success of the above poem, he is far less successful.

For more than twelve years the poet appears to have brooded over these ideas, the fruit of which appeared in 1923 as a long poem named *Keteki*. Here he almost perfectly overcomes his earlier foreign influences and seems quite at home. The poem contains four *tarangas* or

waves of thought, the second and third of which particularly are excellent descriptions of spring season in Assam and its influence on Assamese minds specially on the young folk. It was followed by his third poetical work *Kārabālā* or Muharam Kāvya written in blank verse, and issued soon after. The language and style of this book are Sanskritic and less poetic. About the thirties he published another long poem, *Dahikatarā*, which is also a little Sanskritic in language and style and hence not enjoying the popularity of his *Keteki*. Raghunāth has written also some beautiful flower poems as *Bhetkali* (The Lily Blossom) and *Golāp* (The Rose), and is one of the few later Assamese poets who appears to have loved Nature for her own sake. Of course Raghunāth has no definite poetic creed; but he rather compares with Cowper who takes shelter in Nature, as he must. He is a confirmed bachelor, without any employment and practically depending on literary sympathies and help. He was the editor for one children's magazine *Mainā*, only a few issues of which appeared, and was the editor of one magazine *Surabhi*, for some time.

DURGESWAR SARMA is another poet who first appeared in the first decade of the present century in the pages of the Second Series of *Jonāki*. He was born in 1885 at Patiā Gāon four miles off from the Jorhat town, where he completed his primary education, before he came to study in the local town High School whence he passed the Entrance Examination in 1899. He passed his First Arts course from Kocbehar in 1901 and graduated himself in 1903. He passed the B.L. Examination from Calcutta in 1906 and became a practical lawyer. In 1911 he was recruited from the Bar to be a member of the Assam Civil Service whence he retired in the early forties serving in different capacities and high ranks in the line. Durgeswar's first and perhaps the best contribution to literature was his *Añjalī* (offering) a collection of his early poems, which appeared in 1910. His second collection, *Nivedan* (appeal) towards the close of the second decade. He also issued a few mythological dramas as *Pārtha Parājay*, *Bālibadh*, and *Candrāwatī*, all in blank verse. Even in his dramas Durgeswar appears more as a poet than as a dramatist. He had a happy knack for fine poetic language and diction and as such many of poems in *Anjalī* are popular; but in his attempt to be philosophical in certain poems he becomes prosaic. His language is remarkably simple.

OTHER PROMINENT WRITERS. Sarat Chandra Goswami (1887-1945) son of Lalitchandra, was born at Nalbari, Gauhati on 13th May, 1887 is the last of the writers of the *Jonāki*, later series. He passed his Entrance Examination from the Cotton Collegiate High School in 1904, and his First Arts Course from the Cotton College, Gauhati. He

graduated himself from Calcutta in 1908, and in 1909-10 entered Government service as a Deputy Inspector of Schools. He published his first collection of short stories, *Galpānjali*, in 1914, the second, *Mainā*, in 1920, the third and fourth *Bājikar* and *Pānīpath* in the following twenties. Saratcandra must be long remembered for fostering development of short stories in Assamese.

DANDINATH KALITA, born at Tezpur, specialized in satirical and comic poems, collections of which appeared as *Rahgharā* in 1916, *Ragar* in 1922, *Bahurūpī* in 1928. He also wrote novels and published them as *Phul* and *Sāadhanā* in 1910 and 1930 respectively. He wrote *Satir Tej*, a historical drama on Jaymati. But it is probably for his satirical and comic poems like "Medhi tirthalai yāy" (The religious man goes on pilgrimage) that Dandināth will survive.

AMBIKACARAN (AMBIKAGIRI) RAI CAUDHARI, born at Barpeta, appeared direct with the publication of his poem *Tumi* (Thou) and *Binā* (The Lyre) in 1914 and 1916 respectively. The poems had had the stamp of originality and vitality.

PADMADHAR CALIHA, born at Sibsagar, appeared in 1915 with his collection of songs, *Fulani* (The Flower-Garden), and with his second collection *Giti Lahari* (Waves of songs) in 1921. He published his collection of poems *Sarāi* in 1928, and his blank verse rendering *Amar-Lālā* (*Romeo and Juliet*) sometime earlier.

SURYAKUMAR BHUYA, born at Nagāo, published his poems, *Nirmālī* in 1918. In 1920 appeared his biography of *Anandaram Baruwā* and then the ballad called, *Badar Barphukanar Git*. His *Jaymati Upākhyān*, in the Vaiṣṇavite style and diction appeared as of poet Bhānu Nandan (Surya Kumār). As the permanent Director of the Historical and Antiquarian Studies he published many historical works.

SAILADHAR RAJKHOWA, born at Dibrugarh, published his drama, *Vidyāwati* in 1910, and his collection of poems *Nījarā* (The Fountain) in the thirties.

DIMBESWAR NEOG, born at Sibsagar, first appeared as an author in 1921 with a long elegiac poem *Mālikā* (The Little Garland) now followed by more than a dozen collection of his poems and a larger number of his works in prose on Assamese literature including the Histories.

DAIBACANDRA TALUKDAR, born at Gauhati, first issued his poems *Prem-Pat* (Love-Scene) in 1923 and his drama, *Asam Pratibhā*, in 1923. He is since the author of many novels and dramas.

YATINDRANĀTH DUWARA, born at Sibsagar, and RATNAKANTA BARKAKATI, born at Nagão, first appeared as authors in 1926 and 1933 respectively, the former with his verse rendering of the Rubayats of Omar Khayam and the second with the collection of his poems, *Sewālī*. Yatindranāth has since published his other works *Kathā-Kavitā* (prose-poem) and *Apon Sur*, a collection of his poems in the thirties.

BINANDACANDRA BARUWA, born at Teok, Jorhat, first appears with *Sankhadhvani*, a collection of his poems, in 1925, followed by its successor *Pratidhvani* (The Echo) in 1940. ATULCANDRA HAZARIKA, a resident of Gauhati, who has now issued a good number of plays, first appears with his drama, *Narakāsur*, in 1930 and his collection of poems *Dipālī*, in 1940. Besides these, there a large number of other authors and new writers emerging late towards the close of the period under our review. Deveswar Calihā and Devendranath Bezbaruwā in general history of language; Devānanda Bharali and Kālirām Medhi in philology; Bānikānta Kākāti in philology and criticism; Sonārām Caudhāri, Sarbeswar Kakāti and Benudhar Sarma in research; Hāramohon Das and Pratāpcandra Goswāmi in essay; Indreswar Barthakur Mitradēv Mahanta, Nakulcandra Bhuya, Jyoti Prasād Agarwala and Kīrttināth Bardalai in drama; Kumudeswar Barthakur, Mahācandra Barā, Lakṣmidhar Sarmā, Traillokyā Goswāmi and Halirām Dekā in novels and short stories; Mahādev Sarma in biography, and Nalinibālā, Nilamani Phukan, Lakṣmināth Phukan, Prasannalāl Caudhāri, Deva Kānta Baruwā; Parvati Prasad Baruwā, Ananda Candra Baruwā, Kamaleswar Calihā and others in poetry, songs and essays.

METEORS IN THE LITERARY FIRMANENT make a separate note of some authors or writers of this period, most of whom shone with their genius like meteors exhausting themselves even while shining. The great political leaders of Assam during the twenties and thirties, Nabin Candra Bardalai and Tarunram Phukan are responsible for some of their best poems and best songs and well-written essays and speeches, besides the former's published dramas and the latter's poems and essays on sexology. Candranāth Sarmā of Tezpur, Premadhar Calihā and Ganes Candra Hazarika of Sibsagar, Jnānānanda Jagati alias Tulsi Prasad Datta of Dibrugarh are a few whose contribution to Assamese prose in particular must be long remembered. Memory of Gopāl Candra Bhūyā and Umeś Candra Baruwa of Nagão, Padmanath Sarma of Tezpur, Ganeslal Caudhari of Barpeta, Sinhadatta Adhikari of Gauhati; Thāneswar Hazarika of Sibsagar, Bhavanāth Hazarika and Ganes Candra Gagai of Jorhat, must be cherished at least for some flashes of their poetic talents.

CONTRIBUTION OF MUHAMMADAN WRITERS to Assamese literature is now considerable. Besides the early comic play of Kefayatulla and the pioneer poetical work of Mafizuddin Ahmad, there are Moslehuddin Ahmad of *Majār Galpa* fame, Pajiruddin Ahmad of *Gulenar* reputation, residents of Nowgong and Jorhat respectively. Faizuddin Ahmad of Jorhat was the author of a biography of Muhammad and of a history of Karbala in martyrdom. Ataur Rahman has made scholarly translation and Muhammad Muhibulla a popular Assamese version of the holy Quoran. Azizur Rahman Shah was a text book writer on Islamic subjects. Muhammad Suleiman Khan of Kavitā-Puthi fame is responsible for a good number of beautiful poems for children. "Jili" aliās Genimat Ali, contributed a good number of excellent poems to *Bāhi* in the second decade of this century and Herachatulla wrote many patriotic poems. Saifuddin Ahmad and Firdous Ali wrote some high class essays in local magazines, and Moyidle Islam Bara contributed some fine poems to local magazines. At present we have quite a fair band of young Muhammadan writers of prose and verse, including Mafizuddin Ahmad of Goalpara, Moslehuddin Hazarika and Raihen Shah of Dibrugarh, and Ibrahim Ali of Mangaldai, Abdus Sattar, Abdul Malik, Tafzul Ali, and so forth.

CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN WRITERS of this period is also remarkable. Besides the earlier ones, other early women writers of the first and second decades were Sarat Kumari, Kunti Phukanani, Hemprabhā Dās, Yamuneswarī, Dharmeswarī and Nalinibālā are illustrious. Snehalatā and Candraprabhā, in novels, Prajnā Sundarī and Dhanadā Kumārī on cooking, Bhubaneswarī and Anandākumārī in religious songs, Kamalā-lāyā and Kanaklatā in editing *Ghar-Jeuti*, the organ of the Assamese Women Society; Ratnakumari, Prafullabālā, and Nārāyaṇī in inaugurating the women movement in Assam, Ājalītārā, in children's literature, and Suprabha, in translating short stories, are some women who claim to live long in the memory of the posterity.

### XIII. RETROSPECTION AND INTROSPECTION

ROBUST OPTIMISTS IN THE COUNTER. Anandarām Dhekiāl Phukan (1829-59) inaugurated modern Assamese literature as Rāmmohan Rāy (1774-1833) did modern Bengali literature. Thus the beginning of modern literature of Asam was later than that of Bengal by about half a century. Naturally therefore Assam cannot boast of a galaxy of modern writers in prose and poetry as that of Bengal. But what the Muhammadan chroniclers recorded about the efficiency of Assamese soldiers whom they encountered unsuccessfully, as many as seventeen inroads

of Mughals being repulsed, that every Assamese fighter was all-competent and all-round, was now tested in the literary field. Anandarām who did not live half the years of Rammohan's life and had not the support of a society half as advanced as that of Bengal, really achieved no less wonder than Rammohan, as Colonel Hopkins concluded by instituting a comparison between the two, in the matter of giving lead. Anandaram's lead evoke stalwarts not only like Guṇābhirām (1837-94), his Boswell, but also as Hemcandra Baruwā (1835-96) who produced the first etymological lexicon of the language all by himself like Samuel Johnson. Guṇābhirām also wrote the first history of Assam on scientific lines and conducted the movement in the right direction like Devendranāth Thākur (1817-1905) in Bengali, editing a literary magazine and writing humorous essays. While Guṇābhirām also sought reform by writing plays on widow marriage, Hemcandra, also editing another journal, wrote playlets and forceful satires quickening the intellectual and social life and vitalizing the prose style even as Īśwarcandra Vidyāsāgar (1820-91) did in Bengali. Like Rājnarāyaṇ Basu (1826-99) as eager for an all-round awakening of Bengal through literature, Kamalākānta Bhaṭṭacārya (1853-1936) was burning with the white heat of patriotism through his writings in prose and verse. Another fire-brand patriot of his type with an all-India outlook was Lambodar Barā (1860-1892), who was almost consumed like a meteor. He was himself the master of an artistic passionate prose style as that of Macaulay, having at least one worthy follower in Anandacandra Āgarwālā (1874-1940). Satyanāth Barā (1860-1925) was another master of modern Assamese prose, but following a quite different tradition in thought and style; his matter was mainly moral and his method was to be effective by aphoristic short sentences, finding a follower in Nilamani Phukan long after.

Two contemporaries of Nabinchandra Sen (1847-1909) started writing blank verse in Assamese after Madhusudan Datta (1824-73); they are Ramākānta Caudhāri (1846-89) and Bholānāth Dās (1858-1929) of whom the former was acclaimed for his independent method and the latter was condemned for his slavish imitation. The tradition of blank verse trembling between a little too much of Sanskritization and a little too much of colloquialism ran down for some time till there has been a compromise now. Poems, forms of which are definitely influenced by English, if not their spirit, as also patriotic verses similar to those of Īśwarcandra Gupta (1812-59) and Hemcandra Bandopadhyaya (1838-1903) were written independently in Assamese by Baladew Mahanta (1850-95), Kamalākānta Bhaṭṭacārya (1853-1936), Bholānāth Dās (1858-1929), Ratneswar Mahanta (1864-93), Mafizuddin Hazarika

(1870-1957), Benudhar Rājkhawā (1871-1955), Durgāprasād Majindār (1870-1928) and others, developing the Assamese poetic diction, and having some variety of metres other than the early ones. Curiously enough, growth of Assamese Romantic poetry has no parallel at all in Bengali literature, and if we have to seek any similarity elsewhere we have to do it in English romantic literature itself, just at the lapse of one century after the French Revolution (1789) with the inauguration of the magazine *Jonākī* (1889). Exactly for Wordsworth-Coleridge—Southey, we have the trinity of Candrakumār-Lakṣmīnāth-Hemcandra, Candrakumār playing the part of Coleridge in dealing with the supernatural in addition to other things. It was the best planned and most successful literary movement after the great tide of Vaiṣṇavism in Asam.

Rajanīkānta Bardalai (1867-1939), the creator of the historical novel in Assamese, is popularly styled as Scott even as Bankimcandra was styled as Scott, and Lakṣmīnāth Bezbaruwā (1868-1938) with his pseudonym Kṛpābar Baruwā bears a striking resemblance with Pyāricānd Mitra (1814-83) with the latter's pseudonym Tekcānd Thākur. But these similarities must not necessarily mean imitation; far from it. A study of the two literatures will clearly show that the genius of each race has led it along its own line; and as regards the two pseudonymists, their common specimen is evidently Dickens's *Pickwick Papers*. Bankimcandra was the literary dictator of Bengal in his days and so was Lakṣmīnāth in Asam, even if unofficially; and *Vangadarśan* and *Bāhī* where their respective sceptres. Bringing about a mobility in the prose, a refinement of literary taste, a scientific outlook in criticisms, an intellectual against sentimental approach to assessments of religious works as the touch-stone, and, crowning them all, an enlightenment quickening state, social and cultural consciousness, are the steps by which each climbed their high pedestral. And these must have been creative, not imitative. Two literatures, originating from languages and races of the same source, living side by side and growing hand in hand are bound to have the appearance of sameness, at least on the surface, and to the superficial critic. But some penetration or insight into them may suffice to reveal their difference as between the letters A and B.

**PRESENT-DAY TENDENCIES IN GENERAL.** The wave of romanticism in Asamīya literature was initiated by the publication of the magazine *Jonākī* in 1889, directly inspired by English romanticism, just a century after the commencement of the French Revoution (1789-99); and though never comparing favourably with the tide of the Vaiṣṇavite literature initiated by Śaṅkardew, born in 1449, it is the first conscious



effort towards a regular literary movement after a lapse of about four hundred years. *Jonākī* was followed by the publication of the magazines *Bāhī* in 1909, inducing later romanticism, and *Āwāhan* in 1929, inaugurating the present-day tendencies, again after a century following the birth of Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, the Ram Mohan Roy of Asam, in 1829; curiously making a series of important events of all "nines".

Lakṣmīnāth, the unofficial dictator of the past forty years (1889-1929), was still living, but he now laid aside his *Bāhī* which played the smart double role of flute and a rod for the years immediately preceding. The wholesome influence which he wielded during the four decades was gradually disappearing, and the rebels against the disciplinarian soon mustered strong around *Āwāhan*. All rigour in regard to correctness of language, chastity of style, purity of thought and discipline in literary life was immediately pulled down and the iconoclasts came to enjoy, as it were, their holiday. With their negative gospel they declared that all restraints, linguistic, literary and moral were detrimental to progress in society, and that an emancipation from these 'slaveries' was their duty. So from this period we have more heterodoxies in the literature of the present day than the orthodoxies of the first three decades of the twentieth century, and see a journey to an unknown *El Dorado* of literature.

But this was neither unexpected nor were its causes deep-rooted only in the native soil. As the romantic movement came here about a century after English romanticism, this movement of new literary fashions and tastes, came to this literature rather a bit too late, nearly half a century after it was in vogue in English literature. Curiously enough, the age of these present-day tendencies in English literature synchronizes with the romantic age in Asamiya literature, being started in the last decade of the past century before the first world-war (1914-18); and here we have it about and after the second world-war. The first world war touched Assam so little, and while the second did to some extent, the literature of the period does not exhibit much of it. So the effects of these great wars on Assamiyā literature are far from being direct; and, to be sure, what little we see of them have only trickled through an imitation of English and Bengali literature.

Even Kipling, Bridges, Hardy and Yeats, who first accelerated these present-day tendencies, are considered to be still traditional, compared with the post-war English poets in main who have had the personal and intense experience of the wars and have acquired the capacity of expressing the spirit of the age by varieties of experiments

in technique and form with a new cosmic theory. These poets are in the true sense modern. A fondness for irregular patterns and themes is not the only criterion, and reality, not realism, is the main virtue of present "modernism". Their note of disillusionment cannot be mistaken for pessimism, nor their sense of irony of life for deep-rooted cynicism. Their spirit of sincerity, frankness and genuineness is exactly what has been found lacking in most of their imitators. This new literary fashion came to present-day Asamiyā literature not by its own urge, to be sure, but by the current of the later romanticism becoming definitely feeble and fading, and tempting new experimentists. But the urge being not potent enough, and the experimentalists not appearing to give their heart and soul into their work, these thirty years are not yielding the crops expected.

**OUTPUT IN POETRY AND SONGS.** While the present-day tendencies of world literature are peeping in, the contributions of this period in general, are still substantially from those of the later romantic school. Yatindranāth first appears as an author in the twenties with his verse-rendering of Fitzgerald's *Omar Rubayats*. Even as the English poet really misconceived and misinterpreted the great Persian poet's true philosophy to the world, so the Asamiyā rendering only half interpreted the English poet so far as the depth of the latter's feelings were concerned. But Yatindranāth has his choice of poetic vocabulary and a charm of diction which are mellifluous enough to lull uncritical readers. His *Kathā-Kavitā*, issued in the thirties and fashioned after Turgene's poems in prose, founded a new avenue for neo-writers. Collections of his poems, *Apon-Sur*, issued in the thirties, and *Banful*, issued in the fifties, include some nice love-poems which he penned in the second and third decades of the present century. A confirmed bachelor and a solitary man that Yatindranāth is, his later compositions show exhaustion of his poetic talents, and display the passivity, effimancy and pessimism of his personal life, despite any philosophy that might be attributed to them by erudition.

Ratnakānta appeared as an author in the thirties with his collection of poems, *Sewāli*. Like Yatindranāth, and unlike most of his contemporaries, he lives a life devoted to his Muse; and he finds himself a faithful admirer of Rabindranāth's poetic philosophy. Daṇḍināth, who made his first appearance in the second decade as a novelist, burst forth as a comic poet with his various publications in the following decades. A few of these comic poems like "Medhi Tirthalai Yāy" are expected to stand the tests of time like Cowper's "John Gilpin". Sūrjya Kumār appeared with his collections of poems, *Nirmāli*, before the third decade, and, but for his fame in other fields of culture, he

would be better known as a poet for some of his excellent poems. Dimbeswar who first appeared with his elegy, *Mālikā*, in 1921, has published about two dozen anthologies of his poems in the third and the following decades. Two world scholars, Tripitakācārya Dr. Beni Madhav and Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji have given high estimation of his poetic genius in their Introductions to his anthologies, *Asama* and *Vicitra* respectively. "I think they are all specimens of high class work in any language", writes Suniti Kumār about his poems. Binandacandra, who came with his clever poems in *Śaṅkhadhani* in 1925, is distinguished for his racy phraseology. Atulcandra, who came with several collections of poems, has a conscious effort to cover all flowers and birds and such other subjects of poems with his descriptions. Nalinibālā emerged as a woman writer with her poems of *Sandhiār Sur* about the thirties, and with Dharmeswari and Raghunāth forms a trio of well-known writers without academic career at all. She was widowed early in life and lost her two sons not long after. These reverses of fortune stood her in good stead, and she took recourse to writing verses to give vent to her deep feelings of frustration and griefs. She soon acquired a poetic diction and showed sufficient assimilation of the influence of Rabindranath in her poems. Śailadhar made his appearance with his collection of poems, *Nizara*, in the thirties. He displays talents of catching things of beauty in nature, in events and even in poetry itself. Nilamani, curiously enough, took to poetry from politics, rather on his wrong side of fifty and emerged with his verses in *Jyotikāṇā* about the forties. They are all much clever, but little artistic and less poetic, when one sees them as they are. But if bulk of his verses reads like prose, bulk of his prose does read like poetry, thoughts apart. Ganeścandra with his *Pāpari*, and *Devakānta*, with his *Sāgar Dekhichā*, burst forth in the thirties and forties respectively, much to the admiration of the mass of youthful readers. The former died before the youthful effervescence in his writings subsided, and the latter has taken to politics, leaving his Muse neglected, if not deserted.

The poetic harvest of these thirty years, 1929-59 by the leading or popular poets of later romanticism is, thus, not as rich as it could be expected. Those of them truly devoted to their Muse are few and far between. Some lack perseverance and some want inspiration, the two ingredients of genius. Some have just arrived from and some have departed for, other fields in quest of pelf and power, name and fame. Just a few of them have experimented in new lines of prosody, and still fewer have dived deep into poetry. Dimbeswar's prosodic modifications combined with novel plans to suit new patriotic ideas

as in "Mor Gāo" (1923), "Buranjī Lekhak" (1924), "Seś Gāyak" (1925), "Śāpamuktā" (1924), etc., saw immediate imitators. Binandacandra's adoption of metre of indigenous folk-poetry as in his "Garh-Gāo", and Devakānta's introduction of conversational poems have admirers, but no colleagues. Imitation is apish and is no sign of progress, and poets must show creativeness both in contents and form.

Hemakānta, Navakānta and a line of other neo-modern writers have been trying to introduce the contemporary literary fashion in poetry returning from a study of English and Bengali literature; and a magazine, *Rāmdhenu*, is supporting this move. What for the mass of readers not being sufficiently accustomed to this new fashion, and what for the writers themselves not showing enough energy in their writings, this new move has still been dubbed as foreign. Even as the orthodoxies of today were the heresies of yesterday, so in order that the heresies of today may pass to be the orthodoxies of to-morrow, a spirit of sincerity to oneself, to one's experience, to one's environment and society and to truth must inform one's writings more thoroughly than boasts and threats. Besides, as literature must grow out of life, it cannot ignore "the characteristic spirit of the race" and the "progressive revelation" of the age. A new literary epoch cannot be bluffed into existence like Aladdin's magic palace but must be steadily worked into existence with the wisdom gathered from the history of the growth and decadence of the epoch sought to be replaced. The romantic fashion, which was no less "foreign" than the present one, came to be installed in the hearts of the people by a clear consideration of these facts; and the age showed "sure sign of literary decadence" when the spirit of sincerity in its supporters was gone, and they began to write only to "mark time" besides keeping themselves alive as poets, even if mechanically.

Modern Assamese songs, like poems, are clearly cut off from the past both in matter and tune. They had a precarious start first in blind imitation of Bengali songs both in language and tune, and then in tune alone. Satyanāth and Benudhar were the pioneers in composition of modern songs towards the close of the last century; but the formal inauguration of modern songs was made in the first decade of the present century by Lakṣmīrām with the publications of his *Sangīt Sādhana*, an original treatise on the science of music, and *Sangīt Koṣ* the first comprehensive anthology of regular modern Assamese songs. Padmadhar's *Fulani* (1915) and Dimbeswar's *Safurā* (1923) show instances of original compositions imbibing the tunes of the famous songs of Dwijendral and Rabindranath respectively. This stage became superseded by imitation of indigenous tunes of folk-songs,

accelerated by Jyotiprasād in his drama *Sonit Kūwarī* (1925). Kirtināth's *Bāsantir Abhišek* (1929) and *Luit Kōwar* (1931) mark a distinct development in this line, a rich variety of local tunes being very artistically woven and brought into the playlets. Kamalānanda, Pārvatīprasād and Bhūpendranāth are among the successful successors of this line. As in metres, so in tunes, the folk-literature of Asam can yield a full harvest to poets and singers alike for innovations and inventions. But, O cursed spite, satiety and self-satisfaction, consequent upon undeserved and uncritical appreciation, overwhelm them no sooner than they begin. A careful study of suitability and blending in tunes, of harmony in words and thought, is yet so much to be desired. At the top of it, poets are not, usually, singers, and singers are not, more usually, poets; and this tragedy is more intensified when the lame refuse the blind their eyes and the blind refuse the lame their feet. Modern Assamese songs are yet to come through the mouth of a clarion. It is much a longer distance, than it is ordinarily supposed, from a literate to a litterateur as it is from an alphabet to an incantation. A few words or phrases from a choice poetic vocabulary cannot make a good song howsoever mellifluous the tune; it is always the power of thought that can lend enchantment even to bare words and weave a lasting charm. A nation and its literature demand "joy for ever", not season-flowers.

**NEW DRAMAS, FICTIONS AND SHORT STORIES.** As in poetry, so mainly in the dramatic literature of these thirty years, contributions of the earlier school are still major. The principal, if not the sole, credit of these writers is said to be purging the Assamese stage of dramas translated from renowned Bengali dramatists like Dwijendralal and Girīś Ghōṣe which may not be denied. But this fact itself marks no merit for the writers and leaves no legacy for the society; for literature cannot thrive by any increase in number of indigenous writers if they be indigent in robust ideas and formative thoughts. Vacuum, however voluminous or vast, is void still.

The dramas, in the main, are either mythological or historical; but mythology and history are dead matter until they are quickened by the genius of the writers, who can make living men and women of imaginary gods and goddesses, and can make the remote past a prophet of the near future. Here also, as in other fields, the literature of the present day does not show poverty of men of talents; but men of loyalty to the art, with studies and insight, are still lacking. Social dramas have been attempted by a few; but they have hardly passed the experimental stage. Jyotiprasād, an ambitious and daring talent,

actually gave a lead in writing so-called realistic, but really romantic, dramas; and he needed more time. Mitradew, capable enough, dissipates his energy in trifles. Atulchandra cares more for quantity than for quality. Nakulcandra wants more studies, and Daivacandra needs better concentration. They are commented upon only as types, *Mañirām*, and *Piyali* for the footlight, and the Radio and Cinema plays are among the post-Independence attempts. More often than not, a sentimental or fantastic name for a drama or novel is considered to be half the battle. Asam, with its strategic geographical situation as a frontier state, and with its peculiar position as an island of plains people in a sea of hills population having proverbially museum-like anthropological and sociological varieties, present infinite pictures and problems. Curiously enough, its modern dramatic literature is conspicuous by the absence of proper treatment of these situations and problems, as though the writers suffer from problem-phobia and shyness of new situations for characterisation. Even history conveniently connects the hills population with plains people in various ways; but we have only Lakshmināth's *Dālimī* and Padmanāth's *Jinu*, really one and same character of a Nagā girl in love with Gadāpāni during his flight, to cite as prominent cases. We have not even another attracting picture of a tea-garden life like Durgāprasād's *Mahari*, so true to life.

Even in the plains, the dramatists appear to take only snaps of rural life rather than showing any intimate acquaintance with the society, with the result that their characters usually move like shadows and not like human beings as we find them in society. Jyotiprasād's heroes are romantic like himself and his heroines are like those of his pictures. Daivacandra's *Viplav*, for instance, shows a successful rise of peasants against a tyrannical Zemindar; but Asam, unlike Bengal, is rather a land of all peasants than of Zemindars, which fact takes away much of its significance. Why not till our own field that lies at once virgin and fallow? Talents are measured more by their pluck than by their luck, to be sure.

The horizon, big or small, of Assamese fiction was dominated by Rajanikānta for more than forty years since the last decade of the past century, probably deservedly. Towards the close of the third decade of the present century, while Rajanikānta was still alive, Dañḍināth brought sensation, even if unpleasant, to this small world of fiction by his second novel, *Sādhana*. He did it almost by an electric shock of realistic touch, so called, however unreal it might be to the Assamese society at large. A bolt from the blue in the literary firmament, as it then appeared to be, it was subsequently found to be not; for the sky was espied to be soon blackening and threatening.

So it actually anticipated the attitude of the neo-modern writers of the Āwāhan age presently ushered. Nakedness, which realism rightly or wrongly connoted, soon came to be a watch-word; but nakedness, in babies for instance, is more revered than abhorred for being devoid of wickedness. The brute, as well as the god, is there in man, like Satan challenging God; but to which of them are we to pay our tribute? Sins are there, more or less, in society eating into its core like consumption; but are we to make bargains of it if physicians we would play, without even healing ourselves or without being first immune from it? Delineations, disinterested or otherwise, are adjudged from writers' treatments and intents.

Middle classes and problems arising out of the social incongruities and inequalities, all and sundry, are customarily attempted by neo-modern fictions. But intellect however smart, is not enough; facts must filter in the heart before distribution. Most of our present-day novelists seem to be too in a hurry, with the result that the period under review has produced few fictions of more than passing interests. Like Gorky's *Mother*, for instance, the heroes and heroines must move; but not as mere toys in the hands of the novelists. They must love and live like human beings. Besides Daivacandra of the earlier school, we have Bīṇā Baruwā and Navakānta, as types of fiction-writers of promise and loyalty to their work.

After Lakṣmīnāth, again a founder, and Śaratcandra, his worthy follower, there are Mahicandra and others still adhering to the early school; and Lakṣmīdhara, Trailokyanāth, Ramā Dās and Abdul Mālik, as types of writers of the new Freudian or Maupassant school of short stories. Those who read these new writers generally, do not see the Assamese society as such, but see only a section of it intellectually diseased by so-called education or abominably Anglicized, and a population of college-going boys and girls on the same road, who, in their turn are the admirers of these writers. An unsophisticated society, when they would go to paint, they would not find themselves in their own elements; for the plain nature and simple psychology of these people never attracted them. If they have thus failed to touch the society at large even as Lakṣmīnāth did, they have neither the finish of his characterisation nor the command of his language, they would still boast of their uptodate technique!

What these young writers appear to forget is first, that a living literature must grow directly out of normal life, and is invariably a product of a healthy society; secondly, that a part, especially the weakest one, cannot, and must not, be said to represent the whole; and, third,



that a literature which is rather a natural self-expression of a race's true genius and character cannot thrive by attempts at smothering them to suit writers' whims and idiosyncracies.

BELLES-LETTERS, CRITICISM AND JOURNALISM. Progress of prose style is always a later phase than poetic diction the former being a more intellectual and hard-studied thing and the latter a more emotional and comparatively less cultivated matter. After the first few dozen of stalwarts in modern prose came Suryakumār and Benudhar with chroniclers' clearness, Bānikānta and Dimbeswar with poetic vividness, Jnānanāth and Nilamāni with socio-ethical discourses. A cultured and chaste prose style has always been maintained by these writers all of whom belong to the *Bāhā school*. But this stream is soon dying out there being little culture and less care in the following generation for a dignified prose style.

Again, Lakṣmināth's *Śaṅkardew* (1911) at least in part, is the first specimen of literary criticism in Assamese. Dimbeswar's *Asamiya Sāhityar Jilingani* (1938) and Bānikānta's *Puraṇi Asamiyā Sāhitya* (1942) are its legitimate successors, the former eking out the deep poetic sensibilities of authors, ancient and modern, and the latter laying out scholarly interpretations. But critics are now abroad; from any man with some university connection to any man on the street having some smattering of English criticism, for instance, can come out as a critic of literature! There have been 'historians', lacking a sense of the history and making a mess of all news and views; 'scholars' wanting any erudition and accumen, and yet exhausting all catchwords and quotations of English criticism upon authors who appear to be read, if at all, only by proxy!

Modern Assamese literature was mothered by journalism down from *Oruṇodoi* (1846-72). But if the earlier editors like Hemcandra, Guṇābhirām and Lakṣmināth hailed from their dictators' chair the present-day editors are, almost as a rule, recruited from the unemployed's bench, whence the ill fate of present journalism and of literature combined. "If salt loses its flavour, with what shall it be salted."

The literary output of these thirty years is in itself a testimony of the decadence of the literature owing to disintegrating forces. Hence if this survey seems cruel, it is only to be kind. The people needs self-confidence enough, but self-conceit little; hence any bias towards bluff or camouflage has been carefully avoided. This is undoubtedly a transitional period Indian literatures everywhere have been under-

going, just a phase which started in English literature half a century ago. But as their history shows, the English people were cautious and critical enough to tide over the transition which we have not been; they preferred Tolstoy, Dostoevski and Tchekev of Russian Realism to Flaubert and Zola of French Realism no sooner than they found the former a more vital influence than the latter, which power of elimination is proved lacking in Assamese.

In transitions both the centrifugal and centripetal forces must act in perfect harmony, as in English literature where the "hot-blooded cave-man" in Kipling welded so well with the "cold-blooded intellectual" in Shaw to form an amalgam of new English literature; but in Asamiya literature the counteracting forces in transition are yet to come under the domination of one racial mind and character; for a nation's literature is actually an organic whole of books written somehow and sometime in some language within some geographical area.

## APPENDICES AND SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

THE LAND AS ASAM (p. 1). For the history of the spelling as ASAM *vide* J.A.S.B. XLI, p. 55. A newer attempt to derive it from Boḍo *Ha-com* is too far-fetched. Still another attempt to identify it with one Asma country found in the *Mahābhārata* is again forced. ĀSAM < ĀSYAM < SYAM (people of Siām, like school → ischool). There is no denying the fact that ASAM even as ĀSAM or ĀSAM is first found in its application to its Tai invaders, [now called Āhoms < Āsaums (non-Saumārs) < Ābhaums (non-Bhaumas), howsoever we may derive them] and was next applied in topography to the parts of Kāmarūpa they occupied gradually. In between, or before, no other name has been found to have been used either orally or in literature. Why then make a complexity more complicated?

KAMRUPA (p. 2) and PRAGJYOTISA (p. 4). Much display of erudition is seen in finding Sanskritization of names from Austric, etc. of late. While any possibility of such a thing is not ruled out, we must be warned against excesses. Admission of a possibility, we should remember, is an admission of impossibility at the same time. It is as likely as it is not. So we stick to the origin of the two names from Sanskrit as happily given by the *Kālikā Purāṇa*, etc., until they are rightly superseded.

BHASKARA'S EMPIRE (p. 10). "The emergence of Bhāskarvarmā, the Lord of Prāgjyotṣa, marks a new era in the history of Eastern India ..... Sometimes between 636 and 645 A.D. the Chinese traveller Yuān Chwāng visited Eastern India. It was then divided into the following provinces:

1. Magadha	..	5,000 li	6. Kāmarūpa	..	10,000 li
2. Irina or Hiranya			7. Samatata	..	3,000 li
Parvata	..	3,000 li	8. Tāmralipti	..	1,400 li
3. Champā	..	4,000 li	9. Karṇa Suvarṇa	..	4,450 li
4. Kayangula	..	2,000 li	10. Udra	..	7,000 li
5. Puṇḍavardhana	..	4,000 li	11. Kongoda	..	1,000 li

—*The Social History of Kāmrūpa*, Vol. III, pp. 2, 3. Emperor Bhaskarvarmā was installed on the throne of Karṇa Suvarṇa shortly after Yuān Chwāng's visit to Kāmarūpa. He ascended the throne of Kāmarūpa about 593 A.D. which year has been commemorated by the so-called Bengali era still in vogue.

KAMARUPA NAGARA (p. 15). It is sought to be identified with North Gauhati on no better ground than that a rock inscription stands there recording the fact of repulsion of a Muhammadan invasion of the thirteenth century and there is a place named Rājā Duār, so called possibly since the seventeenth or eighteenth century Koc or Ahom reign. Existence of an old capital should be shown by better proofs. It is still more frivolous to identify Kāmarūpa Nagara with Kāmpūr basing the conclusion on mere similarity of sounds.

KAMARUPA OVERLORDS (p. 18). "From the contemporary epigraphic records we come to know that the Bhauma dynasty of Naraka-Bhagadatta ruled for many years with absolute power not only over Prāgjyotiṣa but also over Gauḍa, Uḍra, Kalinga and Kośala. The inscriptions found in many places in Orissa contain accounts of their rule for over four hundred years.... The emergence of Bhāskarvarmā, the Lord of Prāgjyotiṣa, marks a new era in the history of Eastern India." (pp. 2-3). "The Chinese traveller Yuān Chwāng visited the capital of Kāmarūpa at the invitation of Bhāskarvarmā in 642 A.D. Shortly after this Bhāskarvarmā was installed on the throne of Karṇa Suvarṇa", (p. 13). S.H.K.

"From the large number of copper-plate inscriptions that have been found in Kalinga it appears that after Bhāskar Varmā, a certain relation of his also came to rule over Gauḍa, Uḍra and Kalinga, and he was reputed to be a member of the Bhauma dynasty. We have seen that even the far-famed Lichchhivi dynasty which had entered into matrimonial alliances with the Gupta Emperor and the powerful Mukhari Kshatriyas, felt proud of a connection with Śrī Harshadeva of the Bhagadatta dynasty. The cause of this lies in the fact that their fame and prestige had grown enormously on account of the signal honour done to Bhāskar Varmā and the long rule which they enjoyed over Gauḍa, Uḍra, Kalinga and Kośala.... Śrī Harsha ruled in Kāmarūpa only. The date of Śrī Harsha is approximately 780 A.D. Śrī Harsha (deva), the king of Gauḍa, and father-in-law of Jayadeva II flourished before 733 A.D. Hence Śrī Harshadeva, the ruler of Gauḍa, Uḍra, Kalinga (and Kośala) and Śrī Harsha cannot be the same person.

"After the death of Śrī Harsha (deva) (in 732-733 A.D.), Jayanta styled (as) Adisura, conquered Gauda, and the successor of the Bhauma king, Śrī Harshadeva retired to Orissa", (p. 29). Basu's *The Social History of Kāmarūpa*, Vol. III.

KING KUMARAPLA (p. 19). *The Social History of Kāmarūpa* (Vol. III, p. 41) prepared a genealogical table, incomplete and tentative, to be sure as: Bhāskar Varmā — ? Jayatunga — ? Avanti Varmā — ? Śrī Harshadeva — ? Kshemankara — Sivankara (wife Jayāvatī) — Subhākara or Subhakara (wife Mādhavī) — Sivakara, etc. But it has been found that the Varman line of kings having in all probability ceased with the Kumāra, it was co-opted by the line of Śālastambha whose genealogy with dates are furnished. And making a study of the copper-plate inscription of Mahārājā Lokanātha, Basu himself opines that Loka-

nātha ruled as a feudatory chief under Bhāskar Varmā or his successor about Tipperah which formed part of Samatata. So had been the case of Jayatunga and Avanti Varmā, while Śrī Harshadeva belonged to the line of Śālastambha.

Similarly, *Civilisation of Assam*, published of late, attempts at an extension of the genealogical table after Dharma Pāla (p. 516) in spite of the fact that the line of Pāla kings of Kāmarūpa is known to have discontinued after Dharma Pāla from important sources. Jayapāla of the Śilimpur inscription and the family of Arimatta of legend may not probably be brought in simply for filling up the gap tentatively in any scientific work. Curiously enough, it also attempts at welding the Pāla line of kings of epigraphy with the Jitari family of legend (p. 516)! Why not better leave confusion as such than make it worse confounded?

THE ASURA CIVILIZATION (p. 26). Curiously again, *Civilization of Assam* contends: "We do not rely upon the legend, connecting Naraka with Kṛṣṇa and his divine origin as a result of the Boar incarnation in the first century A.D." (p. 113). All the same he believes in the Mahābhārata war and has tried to show that "he probably flourished in the first century A.D." (p. 113). Also he believes in the legend and in the Epic in spite of himself, at least so far as the historicity of Naraka and Bhagadatta are concerned. He himself raises them from legend to history and only seeks to differ in some minor details. Legends are legends until we can read history into them; and they do not compel us to believe them literally. Bhagadatta's participation in the Mahābhārata war cannot be rejected consistent with reason once we accept Bhagadatta as a historical identity and do not deny the Mahābhārata war in its entirety; it is not up to any person to pick up one among the personalities at will and hang him.

The same work (p. 119ff) seeks to make an amalgam of the Asuras, Dānavas and Kirātas, and attribute "an admixture of Alpine blood" to the Kirātas "because the foundation of the Kirāta rule took place at a time when the Alpines may have already settled in Eastern India." It is unwarranted and again making confusion worse confounded. The Mairānka hill at Beltalā, Gauhati, might be the original habitat of their earliest king Mahiranga Dānava, and Ghataka, the last of his successors might have been killed by Narakasur who had his habitat at the Narakasur hill near by in Dispur (probably Tişpur, a local abbreviation and corruption of Jyotişpur), Gauhati. If "Naraka established a new line", does it not mean also that he did not belong to the line of Dānavas he displaced? And the Alpine origin of Naraka, like that of Janaka of Videha, may be with an admixture of Vedic Aryans; it is admitted almost on all hands. Also, Kirātas of established Mongoloid origin, so widely differing from Asuras of Alpine origin, should have had little to do with the Dānavas of the Ghataka line.

The device of double-barrel gun in research may show erudition, no doubt; but is seldom useful. More than one Naraka, like more than one Kṛṣṇa, may not be brought in without first finishing the efforts at

reconciling the discrepancies either way about one Naraka of strongest traditions, besides strongest legends, established in the *Purāṇas*, in the Epics, and in epigraphy, all of which almost generally agree. Legends and tradition are also strong that Naraka wanted to marry Mother-Goddess Kāmākhyā, in face of which we are constrained to think how the worship of phallus (*yoni*) of Kāmākhyā, may be attributed to Naraka. On the contrary we feel that Naraka was opposed to this phallic worship of the Mongoloids whom he displaced and who carried on their worship of Mother Goddess far into the historical times with the horrible practices such as human sacrifices to her as Kēcāi Khātī (the Woman Eater of raw flesh) in the Copper Temple at Sadiyā, also known as Eastern Kāmākhyā.

THE KALITAS (p. 29). Aryan is more a linguistic than an ethnic term. Used in ethnic sense it may include the Mediterraneans, also called Early Aryans, and Alpines who might have had some admixture of Vedic Aryans; briefly, it includes pre-Vedic or non-Vedic Aryans and excludes the tribal population. To the Vedic Aryan race the Kalitās never belonged, to be sure. They were probably Alpines and more probably possessed a Mediterranean *cum* Alpine culture, later meeting with the Vedic culture. So it is that Kalitās may be connected with the Bhauma rulers beginning with Naraka who is rightly stated as first commencing Aryan rule in ancient Asam, but who was not at home either with the worship of Mother-Goddess or with the Vedic rites.

An "early Iranian-Magian" culture is sometimes attributed to the Kalitās and Bhaumas of the Naraka-Bhagadatta line of rulers in Prāgjyotiṣa; but as we may presently see these earliest Aryan colonists in Asam had little of Magianism in them except their definite disapproval of the Vedic gods. This religion of the Magians or Early Iranians is styled as Zoroastrianism according to the name of its founder. Oriental scholars appear to agree that this one of the five great creeds of Asia thrived not later than twelfth century B.C. Its holy scripture now extant, is commonly, though wrongly, called Zend; it is really *Avesta* (the holy text) which with the Gathas, *Zend* (commentary), may be called *Zend Avesta*. It is written in a language which is decidedly the most ancient parent of the Iranian, and is very akin to the Vedic language. God in *Avesta* is AHURA (Asura) MAZDA, and it is in direct opposition to the *Daeva yasmi* (worship of gods). "*Tōi daēving dān yā dregvatō daenā*" (i.e. oppressors of the world follow Deva-worshippers whose is the religion of the wicked ones). And so forth. (*Vide Zoroastrian Religion and Customs* by E. S. D. Bharucha, 1928). So Kalitā is an ethnic and not a caste name (*Vide Purāṇi Asamat Bhūmuki* by Rajani Kumar Padmapati).

THE VEDIC ARYAN CIVILIZATION IN ASAM (p. 30). Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji, like some others, erred when he said, "...Aryanisation of the Boḍos and of the Kol and Dravidian peoples, and probably also of Mōn-Khmer tribes allied to the Khāsis, in North Bengal, Assam and East Bengal must have begun immediately after Central and North Bengal became Aryanised; and the kingdoms of Prāgiyotiṣa and Kāmārūpa, claiming fabulous antiquity, were established... From its geographical position, Assam was practically an extension of North Bengal, so far as its speech and early history were concerned." *O.D.B.L.* pp. 69-71. The correct view of the actual position is stated by another more modern Bengali scholar:

"Bengal is the youngest part of India, and as islands emerged from the primeval sea, slowly linking themselves together to the main land, they drew colonists from all the points of the compass, from Tibet and Nepal, from Burma and Assam, from Chotanagpur and Gondawana, and from Aryavarta itself... Her mixed origins and extra-continental contacts put Bengal beyond the pale of Vedic civilisation. She played no conspicuous part in the legendary warfare of the Mahābhārata. In recorded history her first appearance is as a Buddhist country visited by the famous Chinese pilgrim Fa-Hian in the fifth century (A.D.)... In the eighth century, King Dharma Pal of Gaur (in Malda district) marched with victorious armies across northern India and thereby made the presence of Bengal felt." *Bengali Literature*, P.E.N., Bombay, pp. 3-4.

Dr. Chatterji was himself conscious of such facts when he wrote: "Some of the early Brahminical works regard the countries of the east, including Magadha, as barbarian lands not suitable for Brahmans to settle or sojourn in: penances are prescribed, for instance, in the Bauddhayana Dharma Sutra—for Vedic Brahmans who went to Puṇḍra, Vanga and other lands" [cf. Aṅga Vaṅga Kaliṅgeṣu Saurāstreṣu Magadheṣu: 'Tīrtha-yātrā vinā gacchan punah saṃskāramarhati.' D.N.]. The Mahābhārata (200 B.C.-200 A.C. in its present form) mentions Bengal, no doubt, but there is nothing to show it was a part of Aryan India." (*O.D.B.L.*, pp. 62-64). Against Dr. Chatterji's fancy of considering Aryanisation of Assam as "practically an extension" of Bengal "from its geographical position", one cannot do better than repeat, even repeat, the glaring historical fact provided from epigraphy: "It is so remarkable that while in the neighbouring province of Gauḍa (Bengal), the alleged import of Ādisura of five Brahmans from Kanaūj on the mythical creation of Saptasthi (700) Brahmans is not attributed to a period earlier than the eighth century A.D., there should be so many Brahmans found in a single village in Kāmārūpa two centuries earlier." (*Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XIX, pp. 115-125).

NARAKA'S ARYAN DESCENT (p. 33). Sure we may be that Naraka was not a member of the Vedic Aryan (Nordic) race; for it was his anti-Brahmanistic behaviour that is said to have courted the enmity of Kṛṣṇa who killed him. So in between the two, it must have been either an Alpine or a Mediterranean or an Alpine-cum-Mediterranean culture which Naraka professed. Guha opines (*Racial Elements*, Ox. Pam.



No. 22) that the Mediterraneans (whom he also styles as Early Aryans) may have been evolved from a common ancestral stock with the Vedic Aryans of a much later period but were bifurcated very early; and that the Pods of Bengal, the Telugu, Oriya, Kanarese, Saraswat, Chippavan and Desatha Brahmans basically belong to this race.

"The Aryan-cum-Mediterranean culture of the Punjab and Madhyadeśa met the Alpine-cum-Mediterranean culture of Eastern India in Bihar, and the result was a synthesis... This synthetic product was Neo-Aryanism the important feature of which was the metaphysical theosophy of the Upaniṣads. Aryan Brahmans learnt this theosophy from the Vrātya kings like Janaka of Videha in whose court was assembled a galaxy of metaphysicians with the famous Yājñavalkya at the head." (*Indian Antiquary*, Vol. III, No. 1).

Naraka was born into this cultural heredity of Janaka of Videha, and his disapproval of *yonī*-worship of the Mongoloid rulers before him is likely to have culminated in his resolve rather to marry the Mother-Goddess. But this does not rule out the possibility that once it is "Mediterranean priests who introduced a religion similar to the crude Śaivism of Mohenjodāro, a mixture of Śaivism and Animism." (*Ibid.*). This also explains how epigraphic records of the Bhauma rulers show them as staunch Śaivites from the beginning.

RISE OF ASAMĪYĀ (p. 39). Dr. Chatterji's advocacy of Māgadhi as the parent Prākṛt of Assamese and Bengali is evidently weak; "Common forms of inflections, as well as common habits of phonetics and syntax show that the dialects of Bengali as well as Assamese and Oriyā on the one hand, and the dialects of the Bihari group on the other, must have originated from some early form of I.A. current in the eastern part of Northern India. To this mother-dialect the name Magadhi has been given... Some of the phonetic characteristics of Magadhi, e.g. <ṣ> for <ś, ṣ, s>, <l> for <r> noticed from a very early period, are preserved or can be traced in its descendants... We have no remains in this immediate source-form (Māgadhi Apabhraṃśa) of the Modern Māgadhi languages preserved for us". (*O.D. B.L.*, p. 21-22). The two characteristics of Māgadhi Prākṛt are almost nil in Asamīyā (and Bengali for that matter), and we have rather <s, or ṣ> occasionally instead of <ś> for the three sibilants. The second characteristic is practically nothing in particular.

Dr. Chatterji writes: "Another Chinese traveller, Hiuen Tshang, visited Bengal during the first half of the seventh century. He has an occasional remark about the language of the tracts he passed through, and his statements are valuable and interesting... Crossing the Ganges from Aṅga to Kajangala, he came to Puṇḍra Vardhana, or North-Central Bengal to the north of the Ganges. From Puṇḍra-Vardhana he went to Kāmarūpa or Western Assam. About their language, Hiuen Tshang says that it differed a little from that of Mid-India. Hiuen Tshang is silent about the language of Puṇḍra-Vardhana or Karṇa-Suvarṇa; it can be presumed that the language of these tracts was identical with that of Magadha... Perhaps this 'differing a little' of the Kāmarūpa

speech...refers to those modifications of Aryan sounds which characterize Assamese as well as North and East Bengali dialects"... (O.D.B.L. pp. 78-79). This is simply giving a complex meaning for a plain statement, whatever be the purpose of so doing. "Valuable and interesting" as the "statements" have always been found, they always mean what they say, neither more nor less, not needing any "perhaps" and not requiring us to feel "curious" about. Mid-India and Kāmarūpa had distinctive speeches in Yuān Chwang's time, and his "silence" over the language of Puṇḍra-Vardhana and Karmā Suvarṇa is surely eloquent in declaring that these territories of modern Bengal had no independent speech of their own. Dr. Chatterji suggests that the language of Bengali then was dependent on Magadhi, and we would assure that it was then dependent on the speech of Kāmarūpa with which it formed the eastern form of North Indian speech.

Circumstances which led to a differentiation of Bengali from its parent Kāmarūpi speech may be illustrated from the following authoritative statements. "In the case of some of these vernaculars like Guzerati, Eastern Hindi and Bengali, the overlay of Sanskrit has been so great that it is now difficult to trace their ancient Pisachi origin. Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji has thus been led to trace the origin of the Bengali language to Vedic Sanskrit through Magadhi Prakṛt, rejecting Dr. Grierson's classification of the Indo-Aryan languages into inner and outer bands and the entire evidence adduced by the anthropologists based not only on cephalic indices but also on other somatic characters and blood groups." (*Indian Culture*, II, 1, pp. 161-65). Also: "He (Dharma Pal of Bengal) was a Buddhist, but the form of Buddhism then prevailing had little of Buddha in it. It was full of gods and goddesses, mostly Tibetan. When Hindu kings replaced their Buddhist predecessors in the tenth century, the Brahmans adopted those deities and incorporated them in the Hindu pantheon....The protest of the Buddhist monks, if any, were rendered ineffective by the advent of the Muslims in 1199 A.D. who disposed of the few remaining monasteries. Whatever other difficulties they experienced under the Muslim rule, the Brahmans were left free to Sanskritize the speech of the people... and to Aryanize their names. The process still continues to this day. As long as they had their share of the spoils of Buddhism, the Brahmans allowed the Muslims to effect mass conversion in regions outside their sphere." (*Bengali Literature*, P. E. N., Bombay, pp. 4-5).

It is really Sir G. Grierson who first postulated and "constructed a scheme for derivation of modern vernaculars from the various local Apabhraṃśas", and alleged that Bengālī, Bihārī, Asamīyā and Oriyā came from Māgadhi. It was immediately challenged by other great authorities like A. B. Keith (*History of Sanskrit Literature*, 1920): "Unfortunately this theoretical scheme will not stand investigation, for the evidence of texts and even of the literature proves clearly that Apabhraṃśa has a different signification....In Bengal we find a type of Apabhraṃśa long in use in Buddhist texts, and a much degraded form, Avahitṭha, is evidenced in the *Prākṛta Pingala* (14th cent.), but the bases even of this Apabhraṃśa is Mahārāṣṭrī, not Māgadhi, testifying to its ultimate western origin....Thus in Bengal the Apabhraṃśa

used was not formed by applying vernacular inflexions to the local Prakṛt;...thus traces of Māgadhi in Bengali are extremely difficult to establish with any cogency." (pp. 32-35).

FOLK SONGS (p. 49). Not only dateless but also timeless as the folk-songs usually may be, they naturally try to rise to the occasions, to be equal to the systems of the day, and to fit themselves to circumstances. "So, with the ancient reots of man's nature, twines the eternal passion of Song. Ever Love fans it; ever Life feeds it: Time cannot age it; Death cannot slay." This explains descriptive anachronism, if any, in semi-historical ballads of *Mani Kōwar* and *Phul Kōwar*, for instance. But not all folk-songs are capable of being produced at all times, as the songs of nature-myths, for a type, as also the semi-historical ballads.

ANIRUDDHA RAM SARASWATĪ (p. 249). Thanks to late Harnarayan Dutta Baruwā, we are now in possession of the eighteen Parvas of the Mahābhārata rendered into Assamese verse almost in its entirety, as edited and published by him. We are further grateful to him for first pointing out that there were two Rām Saraswatīs, one Brahmin and the other non-Brahmin, who made verses of the Mahābhārata. It was as vexing as it was surprising. Who could then be the real and who the bogus poet-laureate of the court of King Nara Nārāyaṇ? To be sure, it could not be both, and Rām Saraswatī is a title given under royal orders of Nara Nārāyaṇ to his poet-laureate. And who was he?

And Vana Parva itself has as many as thirteen upa-Parvas. Throughout, the poet introduces himself variously as Rām Saraswatī, Bhārat Bhuṣaṇ and Bhārat Candra, Kavi Saraswatī and Kavi Candra; and pays his homage to one Mukundadew as his preceptor often times. In one colophon in the *Ādi Vana Parva*, he clearly states (vs. 7-9):

"Jaya Nara Nārāyaṇa nṛpati-pradhān:  
Jāhār samān rājā nāhikay ān.  
Gauḍa Kāmrupe jata pandita āchilā:  
Savāko āniā śāstra dewāna pātīlā.  
Kavisawe śāstra bakhānanta sadā tāt:  
Āmāko niyāiyā thaiā āchanta sabhāt.  
Pāche āmāsāk ājnā dilā bhālamate:  
Āmiyo racilō pad mahā ānandate."

King Nara Nārāyaṇ collected many poets in his court and this poet was one among them who made verses under his orders. In another colophon of *Puṣpaharaṇ Vana Parva*, he throws further light on the point (vs. 839-44).

Jaya Nara Nārāyaṇa Rājā-śiromaṇi:  
Santar param mitra duṣṭar agani,

Āmāk karilā ājnā param sādare:  
 Bhāratar pad tumi kariyoka säre.  
 Āmār gr̥hat āche tikā-bhāṣya jata:  
 Niyoka āpona gr̥he dilōho samasta.  
 Ehi buli Rājā sava baladhi jorāi:  
 Pathāilā pustaka sava āmāsār thāi.

Thus the poet-laureate (Rām Saraswatī) had specific orders from the king to render the Mahābhārat into Assamese verse and sent the poet several cart-loads of commentaries of the Epic from the king's library. The colophons of *Mañicandra Ghoṣ Vana Parva* are of still greater importance (vs. 1423-24).

Śūdrakule jāta huyā parhilō śāstrak:  
 Guru-vākye cinilōho Iswar Kṛṣṇak:  
 Pitṛye mātṛye Aniruddha nām dilā:  
 Kavicandra nām gota Dewane bulilā.  
 Rām Saraswatī nām nṛpati dilanta:  
 Bhāratar pad mok karā bulilanta.

Being a Śūdra he had committed the act of studying the scriptures. He found God Kṛṣṇa by the mercy of his preceptor. His parents gave him the name of Aniruddha. Dewān (Cilārāi) called him Kavicandra. Rām Saraswatī was the title conferred upon him by the king himself who ordered him to make verses from the Mahābhārat.

Nothing can be clearer than this. The proper name of the poet is Aniruddha. But we must be warned that there is another Aniruddha (Dwija) who possibly rendered 2021 verses of *Ādi Parva* and 1773 verses of *Sabhā Parva*. And there is also a third Aniruddha, the author of *Bhakti Mangal*. We have still more important details here (vs. 2369-71).

Śuna sabhāsad, huyā niśabad, manat ānanda kari:  
 Mañicanra Ghoṣ, Rām Saraswatī, vicitra race dulari.  
 Vana Parva kathā, param gahan, Purāṇ Samhitā sār:  
 Pancīś hājār, tikā jānā ār, ślok cāriśa hājār.  
 Agādh sāgar, Dvaipāyane āk, kari āche nivandhan:  
 Kon śakti āk, vicār kariba, āmār bālak man.  
 Tathāpito ār, pad viracilō, pondhara hājār māt:  
 Ān kavi save, tini sahasrek, kari āche vidyamān.

So, of about 18,000 verses Aniruddha Rām Saraswatī alone contributed about 15,000 verses, the remaining 3,000 verses being contributed by several minor poets.

Among these minor poets might be one with the proper name, not title, Rām Saraswatī, and with his elder brother's name, not title, as Kavicandra, the two names being the two titles, curiously enough, of the poet-laureate conferred by king Nara Nārāyaṇ and his brother

Dewān Cilārāi! This duplicate self of the poet-laureate is found to be one of the translators of *Bhīṣma Parva*, like Vidyā Pancānan, for instance, who introduces himself in the following colophon (vs. 1350-53):

Kāmṛup madhye grām nāhika upām:  
Tāte grām bhailā Camariā jār nām.  
Sehi grāmeswar bhailā Kavi Curāmaṇi:  
Paṇḍit gaṇar madhye jāk agra gaṇi.  
Govindar bhakatit jāhār din gaila:  
Āta anantare tār dui putra bhaila.  
Jyestha bhaila Kavicandra āti śudhamati:  
Tāhān anuja bhaila Rām Saraswati.

One of the translators of *Droṇa Parva* is Gopināth Dviṇa who, again, in his colophon quoted below introduces his father as one Rām Saraswati. Let us hope he is not a triplicate self of the poet-laureate, but one and the same person as the duplicate (vs. 4011-13).

"Pātaurā nāme, āche ek grām, Cinākoṇ nām jār:  
Sehi grāmeswar, mahā deśadhar, Bhīmsen dvijabar.  
Tāhān santati, Rām Saraswati, Pāthak Śukladhvajar:  
Tāhān tanay, āti śubhanay, Gopināth Dvijabar."

But while the colophon of the duplicate himself calls his father one Kavi Cūramāṇi of Camariā, Gopināth names his father as Bhīmsen of Pātaurā Cinākoṇ. This much difference may be reconciled if Kavi Cūramāṇi be the title and Pātaurā Cinākoṇ a new name or a changed habitat near Camariā. This identification makes the duplicate rather a Pāthak (Reader) than a poet. Else how can we think these names were invented to combat the true poet-laureate?

PRITHURAM DVIJA (p. 261). Further review of this poet makes us inclined to think that the date of his work might really be Śak 1717 (A.D. 1795) as he might mean *muni* (7) when he said *siddha* (4). The internal evidence appears to be much against Śak 1417 (A.D. 1495), as also some external evidence mentioned by us by the way.

JONAKI (p. 391). Even Prof. Bloch was led to misbelieve and miscalculate a Bengali influence through the Asamīyā magazines published from Calcutta. It might be plausible, but was not possible. It was a wrong surmise like Prof. Chatterji's guessing Aryanisation of Assam as happening after that of Bengal, simply because the Aryans came from the west, while just the opposite was the fact. An imperfect knowledge of the social and literary history of Asam is really responsible for such mistakes. These magazines published by the Asamīyā students living in Calcutta rather initiated a crusade against usurpation and imposition of Bengali on Asamīyā. These enthusiastic students also started the well-known *Asamīyā Bhāṣār Unnati Sādhinī Sabhā* in

Calcutta and published a catalogue of Assamese books in February, 1895, besides doing other useful works.

In order to counteract anti-Assamese propaganda some of these stalwarts like Lakṣmīnāth Bezbaruwā, who later on married in the Tagore family of Bengal and also became the unofficial dictator of Asamīyā literature in the present century, really wrote in Bengali magazines too in defence of Assamese and secured acclamation of the sober section of people in Calcutta. It is this bright band of Asamīyā students in Calcutta who vehemently criticized the British government for writing 'Babu' before the names of Assamese gentlemen as it was done in the case of Bengalees. They came out doubly victorious, for they not only got 'Srijut' written for Assamese gentlemen, but also had it followed by others.

**PRESENT-DAY TENDENCIES** (p. 437). Plato is said to have banished poetry, and literature and art for that matter, from his ideal Republic, though he himself had been a poet of no mean order. His contention was that art generally deals with the most ephemeral and unreal aspects of the world, and so its effect on the soul and society is precisely the opposite of what is truly wholesome. It encourages the rule of the senses and passions, and renders the soul incapable of ascending from the unreal to the real. All imitative art pollutes the average understanding by things begotten of three removes from nature. So the imitation is a beggar wedded to a beggar and producing beggarly children.

Thus it is a pity that artists as Guy De Maupassant whose life and death history are equally wretched should be the model of Indian story-writers. Maupassant had the misfortune of moving and living in the midst of human beasts, guided by no principles but greed and lust which vices he made attractive by the abuse of his pen that was meant for building heaven rather than digging hell.

**OUTPUT IN POETRY AND SONGS** (p. 439). Of late, factors accelerating rather a retrograde motion of the literature have been copious and various. Mushroom growth of coteries parasitical to state-wise educational and literary institutions, capitalising uncritical public and press opinions, appears as the worst menace. Since there can be no correct measure by a wrong balance, no proper estimation of literature in the market has been possible for the average readers. A gay cover and a fanntastic name being considered more than half the battle by authors and publishers for a book, any exercise in permutation and combination of a poetic vocabulary passing for a poem or song, it has been increas-

ingly difficult for people to know worthy writings from nice heaps of printed matter. Even literary encouragements and Radio programmes appear to be made not on the basis of intrinsic merit but on that of party, power and politics, and by people so interested.

Ultra-modern poems seem to infuse, the more so, probably, as they have been made, a sort of terror into the minds of readers used to romantic poetry. Fault is there perhaps on both ends; these readers are sceptic about, as these writers are enthusiastic over, new forms of poetry, and here is the trouble. In literature, our first and foremost concern is *what* is written; *how* comes next: this should also apply to writers themselves. A bias and concentration on form must defeat its own purpose. On the other hand, there is no denying the fact that romanticism in Asamīyā literature has already outlived after 1929, completing two scores of years from 1889 and living a full term of average human life. It had now just been marking time and anticipating a change, a new life-breath.

BELLES-LETTRES, ETC. (p. 445). Edward G. Browne, in his *Literary History of Persia*, raises a very pertinent question whether some subtle connexion really exists between the deterioration of a language and decay of a race. "Already before the Battle of Hastings the Anglo-Saxon or Old English language had, to a great extent, ceased to be written grammatically, and it was in full decadence before the Norman invasion". As regards the Old Persian language at least, Browne asserts: "This appears to be beyond doubt...And concurrently with this decay of language appear signs of degeneration in creed. Ahura Mazda no longer stands alone, but is associated with other gods, Mithra (the Sun) and uhlta (Venus)". (*L.H.P.*, p. 95). This hint should serve as a serious warning to the Asamīyā people in whose culture similar symptoms of decay are suspected. No amount of self-complacency, but serious efforts in removing the cankers present in society and literature, can prevent the downward acceleration to decay.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY OF OTHER WORKS BY THE AUTHOR

A. BOOKS IN ASAMIYA. *Ākul Pathik* (Amorous folk-songs by men), *Phāgunī* (Amorous folk-songs by women), *Bihuwati* (folk-songs of the Bihu festival): 1922, 1928, 1933, 1940, 1946, 1956, 1962. *Bhogjarā* (Devotional folk-songs by women), *Putali* (Nursery rhymes), *Pārijāt* (Devotional folk-songs by men): 1928, 1943, 1962. *Ādhunik Asamīyā Kāvya-Pratibhā* (Representative Anthology of Assamese poetry from 1830 to 1930), 1934. *Ādhunik Asamīyā Sāhityar Buranjī* (Exhaustive history of Assamese literature from 1830 to 1930 including an account of the Assamese newspapers and periodicals produced and published during the period), 1937. *Asamīyā Sāhityar Jilingani* (Studies in Assamese Literature, Book One), 1938. *Asamīyā Sāhityar Buranjit Bhūmuki* (A Peep into the History of Assamese Literature from the earliest times till 1940 A.D.), 1940. *Vaiṣṇava Dharmar Āti-Guri*, (Origin of Vaiṣṇavism in India): 1940, 1954. *Vaiṣṇava Dharmar Krama -Vistār* (Propagation of Vaiṣṇavism in India), 1943. *Vaiṣṇava Dharmar Bhakti-Tattva* (Cult of Love in Vaiṣṇavism), 1944. *Prāk-Aitihāsik Asam* (Pre-Historic Asam), 1947. *Rah-Rahi* (Assamese proverbs), *Pānī-Miṭhai* (Assamese Riddles), 1948. *Asamīyā Sāhityar Buranjī* (History of Asamīyā Literature, abridged), 1950. *Asamīyā Kathā Pratibhā* (Comprehensive Anthology of Assamese Prose from the earliest times), 1950. *Asamīyā Kāvya Pratibhā* (Representative Anthology of Assamese Poetry from the Earliest Times), 1951. *Asamīyā Bhāṣā Āru Lipir Kāhinī* (The Story of the Origin of Assamese Language and Script). *Sāhitya Ki* (What is Literature, inclusive of studies in Assamese Rhetoric and Prosody), 1952. *Asamīyā Sāhityar Buranjī* (History of Assamese Literature, enlarged), 1956.

B. BOOKS IN ENGLISH. *Introduction to Assam—the Country, the People, the Speech*, published by M/s. Vora & Co., Bombay, 1947. *Mahāpurushiyāism, a Universal Religion*, 1950. *History of Modern Assamese Literature from 1826 to 1947*, published by the Gangānāth Jhā Research Institute, Allahabad, 1955. *New Light on History of Asamīyā Literature including an Account of its Antecedents*, 1962.

C. MONOGRAPHS IN ASAMIYA. (a) In *Cetanā*, 1921-24. *Appreciations of the Kīrttan—Rāsakriḍā, Hara-Mohan, Vaikuṇṭha Prayāṇ. Studies on Śaṅkardew and Mādhawdew. Appreciations of Folk-songs—Amorous songs by men and women, Devotional Songs, by men and women. Appreciation of modern love poetry.* (b) In *MILAN*, 1923-26. *A Peep into*

the *History of Assamese Literature—Ancient, Mediaeval, Modern. Assamese as a descendant of the Indo-Aryan. Studies in the Aphorisms of Dāk Puruṣ. A Study of the History of Sanskrit Literature. Appreciations of types of Modern Assamese Literature—Poetry, Novel, Drama.* (c) JEUTI, 1933-49. *On Appreciation of and Harmony in Literature. On Homer's Iliad and Odyssy. The Modern Period of Assamese Literature.* (d) In AWAHAN, 1929-40. *Historicity of Śaṅkalādib. Ballads of Maṇikōwar and Phul Kōar.* (e) In *Asam Sāhitya Sabhā Patrikā*, 1926-44. *Criticism of "Sāhitya Vicār" (What is Literature). Power of Assimilation in Early Assamese. Religious Doctrine of Mādhawdew. Nārādīya Bhakti Sūtra—An Appreciation. Assamese Literature in the University. On the Study and Importance of Literature. Assamese in relation to the Prākṛits. Is the Language of Kṛṣṇa Kīrttan Bengali? Mādhura Bhāva in Bengal Vaiṣṇavism. Appearance of Rādhikā in Pan-Indian Vaiṣṇavite Literature.* (f) In BAHI, 1921-31. *APPRECIATIONS OF: Pratimā, (lyric poems) XI; Cintānal (patriotic poems), XVI-7; Caku-lo (sonnets), XVII; Biā nām (marriage songs) XIII-9; Ban-Ghoṣā (amorous folk-songs) XV-2; Dhāi nām (nursery rhymes) XVII-12; Yojanā-Paṭantar (Proverbs and Aphorisms) XV-9; Cordharā Nāṭ (a Vaiṣṇavite drama) XV-6; Piparā-Gucoā Nāṭ (another Vaiṣṇavite drama) XV-6; Kāṅkhowā (Two Vaiṣṇavite poems) XX-12; Bhīm-Carit (a humorous Vaiṣṇavite epic) XXI-1; Reviews of *Asamīyā Bhāṣār Maulik Vicār* (a philological treatise) XXII-2; *Asamīyā Bhāṣā āru Sāhityar Buranjī* (a linguistic cum literary history) XXII-4; on Sanskr̥t, Prākṛt and Assamese, XVIII-10; *Samāj Gathanat Śaṅkardew*; On so-called "oldest Bengali poets", XVII-3; On the Common Origin of Assamese and Bengali, XVIII; *Vidyāpati, the Maithili poet*, XIX; *Kavindra, the warrior-poet*, XX-8-9; On Art in its Relation to Beauty, XVI-8; On Literature in its relation to Life; On Poets and Poetic Genius, XVI-1-2; On Love in Literature, XVII-1, ff.; *Shakespeare and His Tragedies*, XIX-3; *Kālidās and his Meghadūt*, XIX-9; *Meghadūt and Monsoon*, XXII-8; *Candidās and Vidyāpati, a comparative study*, XX, 10; *Kavir, the Hindi poet*, XX-5; On Classicism of Śaṅkardew, XXI-1; *Śrī Kṛṣṇa in history*, XVII-5; Review of "*Viṣṇu O Vṣṇu-Pūjak*", XVII-4; On Rise of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism, XVII-1-2; on *Śrīmadbhagawat Gītā*, XXI-3; on *Gāndhī-Bhāṣya Gītā*, XII-3; On Classical Descriptions of Kṛṣṇa, XXI-5; On *Saguṇ and Nīguṇ* forms of worship, XIX-8; On the religious faith and doctrine of *Mahāpuruṣāsm*, XIX-5, 6, 7 (reproduced also in the *Asam Sāhitya Sabhā Patrikā*); On Tendencies of Modern Literature, XXII-5, 6, 7; On Assamese Text-Books in the University, XXI-2, 4; On Assamese Text-Books for Secondary Schools, XXI-9, 11; On the Assamese drama and the stage.*

D. ARTICLES HISTORICAL, SOCIAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL. English: In THE ASSAM RESEARCH JOURNAL (Gauhati): *The Time of Sankalādib*, 1938-39; *The Language of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kīrttan*, 1938; *The Language of Gopīcandrar Gān*, 1938. In THE ALL-INDIA WEEKLY, (U. P.) *Romanticism in Assamese Literature*, 1943. In THE P. E. N. JOURNAL, (Bombay), *Mother-Goddess Kāmākhyā—A Review*, 1947. In THE TIMES OF ASSAM, (Dibrugarh), *Small hours of the Dawn of Journalism in Assam*, 1943; In THE ORGANIZER, (New Delhi); *Struggles of Neo-Vaiṣṇavism in Assam* In THE MODERN STUDENT, (Calcutta), appeared one series of articles as *The Making of the Assamese Speech*; *Old Kāmarūpi Poets of Buddhist Songs*; *Early Assamese Translators of the Epics and Purāṇas*; *An Assamese Vikramāditya*; *Śrī Śaṅkardew and Neo-Vaiṣṇavism in Assam*; *Place of the Nāma-Ghoṣā in Literature*; *Two parallel Influences on the prose style of Modern Assamese*; *The History of Assam's Sunset*; *The Literary Efforts of the American Baptist Mission Foreign Society in Assamese*; *Assamese Literature before Śaṅkardew*, 1942, etc. In THE GANGANATH JHA RESEARCH INSTITUTE, Allahabad, *History of Modern Assamese Literature*, (1826-1947). In ASSAMESE. BAHI: *Dhubri in Sikh Chronicles*, XVII-12; *Ancient Relics of Barpetā*, XVIII-2; *A copper-plate inscription of Sundaridiā Satra*, XIX-2; *Rāmrair Kuthā or Chatraśāl Satra*, XVII-3; *Peep into the old kingdom of the Bāra Bhūyās*, XIX-4; *Śaṅkardew as a Social Reformer*, XVII-1, 2, 3; *Message of Śaṅkardew to the future generation*, XIX-3; *Place of women in society*, 6, 8, 10. In ASAM SAHITYA SABHA PATRIKA, *Marriage, its origin and development*, 1929. In SEWA, *On the Caste System*, Vol. II-2. In BAHI, *The aim of Philosophy* (translated), XII; *The Science of Brahma*, XVIII-8; *Appreciation of "Hidden Traces of Buddhism,"* Milan, IX.

E. ARTICLES: EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC, EDITORIALS, OBITUARIES: In BAHI: *Educational system in England*, XIII; *Service and student life*, XX-4; *Aimlessness of Students*, XIX-5, 6, 7; *Defects of English Education in India*, XVII-8; *Progress of Science*, XVIII-4,7; *On Science*, XVIII; *Water and Ice*, XX-1, In MILAN: *Brahmacharya and Student Life*, VII; *Village boys and Education*, IV-4; *Inorganic Chemistry*, 1927; *Food and Food Value*, VII-1; *Water and Its Chemistry*, VII-3; *Soil and its Chemistry*; *Gifts of Science*, III; *Editorials Vols. II, III, IV*. In AWAHAN, *Service by Students*, I-1. In JEUTI: *Play-way in Education*, 1937.

F. ALL-INDIA RADIO TALKS IN ASSAMESE AND ENGLISH. A.I.R., CALCUTTA: *Assamese Buddhist Poets*, 4-3-'47; *Barāgi āru Deh-Vicārar Gīt*, 4-3-'47. A.I.R., GAUHATI: *Bihu Nām āru Hucari Gīt*, 12-2-'49. *Phonology and Orthography in Assamese*; 22-1-'51. *Amorous Assamese Folk-*

songs, 13-2-'51. *Assamese Marriage Songs*, 27-2-'51. *Assamese Nursery Rhymes*, 13-3-'51. *Assamese Pox Songs*, 13-3-'51. *Anandarām Dhekial Phukan*, 4-4-'52. *Pāṇindranāth Gagai*, 1-7-'52. *Amorous and Pseudo-Folk Songs in Assamese*, 13-4-'56. *Candrakumār Āgarwālā*, 28-5-'56. *Aphorisms of Dāk* (English), 4-12-'56. *New Light on Omar Khayām* (Assamese), 9-12-'57. The same (English), 22-3-'58. *Mystics and Mysticism*, (English), 3-9-'61. *Wit and Humour in Modern Assamese Literature*, 30-9-'61. *Kavir, the great Mystic Reformer*, (English), 23-12-'61.

### INTRODUCTION TO ASSAM

"There lies in the north-east of India a province named Assam, rich in its ancient culture and historic traditions, and about which few of us know not more than that it is a forest-ridden country. DIMBESWAR NEOG, a reputed scholar of Assamese literature, brings into light in a lucid style, its ancient glory by having a peep into its history from the earliest times to the advent of British rāj. A historic pageant of Ancient Assam unfolds before our eyes by his graphic descriptions and quotations from ancient scriptures."—VORA & Co., Publishers Ltd., Bombay-2.

"This well got up little book sets forth the main facts relating to Assam in the form of brief notes mainly consisting of citations from the most authoritative sources available. In his appreciative Preface to the work the Premier of Assam, Sir Gopinath Bardolai, says:—"In the treatment of the subject S. J. Neog has displayed mastery of facts, mature judgment in describing the trends of events of the times, and above all, scholarship of considerable merit. He has attempted to compress into paragraphs what in my opinion, would have taken a chapter, and a chapter into what should have been a complete part of the book." Indeed, as he goes on further to remark, while he has in the book before us practically all the available materials to obtain a comprehensive idea about the Ancient, Mediaeval and Modern times of Assam, it is not easy reading, and one hopes that the author will find the time and the inclination in future to clothe with flesh and blood the dry bones he has so diligently gathered on the subject so dear to his heart."—THE INDIAN REVIEW, Madras, December, 1948.

"This is an ambitious work claiming to give what the Premier of Assam says in the course of his appreciative Preface, "the details of every phase of its activities of the people of Assam from the pre-historic times to the modern days." He has laid under contribution nearly all the sources including standard works bearing on the subject."—THE MODERN REVIEW, Calcutta, January, 1949.

## INDEX OF MORE IMPORTANT NAMES

- Abhimanyubadh kāvyā*, 385; *Ādi-carit*, 242,—*Kāṇḍa*, 238, A.B.M. F. Society, 337, *A Few Remarks*, 350.  
*Ajāmīl-upākhyān kāvyā*, 175, 188;—*Byhat*, 229.  
 Alpine civilisation, 26-29, 38; *Anādipātan kāvyā*, 174-75.  
*Aniruddha Rām Saraswati*, 131, 249-53,—*Kāyastha*, 268.  
*Ananda Āgarwala* 427. *Dhekial Phukan*, 364.  
*Ananta—Ātā Thākur*, 284-85; *Kandali* See H.C.).  
*Asam*, *Axam*, 1-2, 37-38, 44; *Asur civilisation*, 26, 28, 44.  
*Bakul Kayastha*, 131; *Baladew Mahanta*, 385.  
*Balicalan*, 175, 199; *Balinārāyan*.  
*Bargits*, rise of, 223; of S.D., 224-26; of M.D. 234-41.  
*Bauddha Tāntric contribution*, 84; *Benu-dhar Rājkhawā*.  
*Bhagadatta*, 3-4, 12, 15-16, 28-29, 32-33, 36, 45, 97 ff.  
*Bhakti—Pradīp*, 161, 171-74; —*Ratnākara*, 177; —*Ratnawālī*, 184, 220, 229.  
*Bhāskarvarmā*, *Kumāra*, 6-10, 12, 15, 17, 27, 29, 33-34, 39-40, 46-47, 84.  
*Bhīmcarit kāvyā*, 253; *Bhōlānāth Dās*, 386.  
*Bronson*, *Miles*, Rev. 344.  
*Brown*, *Nathan*, Dr. 342; *Eliza*, 344.  
*Burānjī*, *Kāmārūpa*—311, *Tripura*—311, *Tungkhungtiā*—312.  
*Candradhar Baruwā*, 428-29. ,  
*Candrakumār Āgarwālā*, 401-08.  
*Caryapadas*, (*Dohās*), 57-69.  
*Dāk-bhanita*,—*vacan*, 72-80; *Dandi Kalitā*, 433.  
*Darang Rājvarṣāwālī*, 84, 131, *Dewajit*, 121.  
*Dharma Pāl*, 12, 14-16, 18, 20, 22, 47, 90-92, 108, 114, 126, 137.  
*Dīpikācandra kāvyā*, 229, 261.  
*Durgābar Kāyastha*, 110, 126-28.  
*Durgeśwar Śarmā*, 432.  
*Durlabhnrāyan*, 16, 22, 90, 108-12, 126, 137.  
*Dutirām Hāzarikā*, 382; *Eastern Sea*, 5.  
*Gān*, *Gopīcandrar*, *Maināmātir*, 16, 92, 93. *Ghorānidān*, 317.  
*Gīt*, *Ajān Fakīr*—318-22, *Badan Bar-phukanar*—324-25, *Dehbidrār*—70, *Ful Kōwarar*—54, *Janā Gābharur*—322-23, *Kācan Kūwarir*—54, *Mani-Kōwarar*—52, *Manīrām Dewānar*—323.  
*Gopāl—Ātā*, 258, —*Dviija*, 259, —*Miśra*, 260.  
*Gopināth*, 384; *Govinda Miśra*, 270.  
*Guṇābhirām*, 375-79.  
*Guṇmālā*, 181; *Guru*—182-83, 287-88.  
*Halīrām Dhekial Phukan*, 362; *Harakānta Barua*, 364; *Haribilās*, 389.  
*Harihar Vipra*, 109-11, 135; *Haricarān Ananta Kandali*, 117, 176-77, 242-44  
*Harīscandra Upākhyān*, 161, 166, 171.  
*Hastividyaṛṇava*, 316, *Hemcandra Baruwā*, 370-75; *Goswāmī*, 415-17.  
*Hem Saraswati*, 93, 107, 112, 117; *Jādu-rām Deka Baruwā*, 361.  
*Jikirs*, 128, *Jonāki* (period), 391.  
*Journalism*, progress of, 388.  
*Kalibhārāt*, 383, *Kamalākānta*, 396.  
*Kālīkā Purān*, 3, 12, 46, 47, 123.  
*Kalitās*, 27, 29, 30, 32, 35, 36, 37.  
*Kāmarūpa* (*Kīamaleupo*), 2, 3, 5, 7, 9-12, 15-18, 20-22, 25 29-30, 35, 37-38, 40, 46-47. *Nagara*, 15-16, 46; *Kamatāpur*, 15-17, 23, 47.  
*Kānkhawā*, 247-48; *Karati Mantras*, 86-87.  
*Karṇasuvarṇa*, 6, 8, 9, 38; *Kausika*, *Kosi*, 5, 8, 27, 30.  
*Karṣāri Kāyastha*, 256; *Kāśīnāth*, 363.  
*Karṣāri Kāyastha*, 256; *Kāśīnāth*, T.P.  
*Kathā—Bhāgawat*, 272, —*Gītā*, 272, —*Nām-ghoṣā*, 300, —*Rāmāyaṇa*, 299, *Sāttvata*, 301.  
*Kavi—Indra Bānīnāth*, 134, —*Ratna*, 132, 135; —*Rāj Cakravartī*, 294.  
*Kīrttan*, 108, 161, 165-66, 174, 183-214, 230.  
*Kṛṣṇakīrttan*, 92-93, 95, 99-105; *Kumār Haraṇ*, 244.  
*Lakṣmīnāth Bezbaruwā*, 408-15; *Lambo-dār Bara*, 398.

- Mādhaw—Bardolai, 390; -Dew, 93, 115, 146-51, 157-58; -Kandalī, 93, 113-21, 128.
- Mahāmānikya, 113-15; Māyāmarā Rebelion, 276, 281.
- Manirām Dewān, 363; Mankar, 125-26.
- Mediaevalism, 105-06; Mediterraneans, 26-27; Mysticism (Symbolism), 67, 85.
- Nām-Ghoṣā, 158, 184, 229-34; -Mālikā, 158, 174, 229, 264; Nām (songs), Ai (Pox), 87-89; Biā (marriage), 330-33; Dhāi (nursery), 49-50, Tokāri (Guitār), 71.
- Naraka, 3, 12, 13, 25-29, 32-36, 43-45, 90, 150.
- Nara-Nārāyaṇa, 131, 150-56, 250.
- Nārāyaṇadew, 128-30; Nidhi Levī, 345, 380.
- Nimī Nava Siddha, 177-80.
- Ojā Pāli, 127; Orheṣā Varṇan, 161, 165-66.
- Padmanāth, 422; Pītāmbar Dviṇa, 132-34.
- Pārijāt Haran, 218-19; Pimpārā Gucoā, 235.
- Prāgiyotiṣa, -pura, 3-6, 12-13, 19, 26-29, 37.
- Prahlād Carit, 107-08, 180; Proverbs, 51.
- Prose, development of, 274, -Christian, 358-61, chest-paper, 313, dynastical, 309, diplomatic (epistolary), 305, copper-plate (inscriptional), 313; historical, 304; modern, 367; scientific, 315; slave-sale, 314, sociological, 307.
- Puruṣottam Gajapati, 229, 265; Bhattā, Thākur, Vidyāvāgis, 131-32, 182.
- Raghu—Dew, 383, Caudhāri, 431, Mahanta, 299.
- Rajani Bardalai, 417; Padmapati, 450.
- Rāmākānta, 384.
- Rām—Caran, 257-58, Candra, 290, -Miśra, 286, -Nāth, 291, Rām Mālikā, 174.
- Ratnākar—Kandalī, Sukavi Sekhar, 165, 244-46, Miśra, 269; Ratneswar, 400.
- Renascence, 105-06, 124; European, 105.
- Indian, 106, Asamīyā, 107, 277; continuation of, 283.
- Rukmiṇī Haran—anka, 133, 161, 219; kāvya, 167-71.
- Śankal, 5, 52-54; Śāṅkardew, 93, 115-228ff.
- Sārvabhauma, 254-56, Śaṣṭhibar, 130; Satyanāth, 399.
- Śrīdhar, 110, 131, 165, 247-49; Srihastā muktāwālī, 302-03, Śrīrām Kīrttan, 284. Śūnya Purāṇ, 92, 93, 97-99.
- Yuān Chwāng, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9-11, 16, 27, 30, 37-38, 46-48, 168.
- Yoginī Tantra, 20, 35, 123-24.
- Vaikuṇṭhanāth Bhattadew, 271-73.
- Viśveswar, 381.







*"A book that is shut is but a block"*

CENTRAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL LIBRARY

GOVT. OF INDIA  
Department of Archaeology  
NEW DELHI.

Please help us to keep the book  
clean and moving.